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OF

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MEMOIRS

OF

SIR ROBERT PEEL,

BART.

CHAPTER I.

Character of Sir Robert Peel.—His Entry into Public Life.—His Father the first Baronet.—His presentiment that he should be the founder of a Family.—His Son's career at Harrow and Oxford.—Sir Robert Peel and Lord Byron.

At the period of the death of Sir Robert Peel, now more than six years ago, I felt an earnest desire to pay him my public homage, and to indicate what, in my opinion, would be his characteristic physiognomy and position among men who have governed their country. But it is difficult to speak of the dead, even of the best, in presence of the feelings which burst forth around their grave, and when it seems that they themselves are still present, and hear the words which are spoken about them. A sincere homage can be fittingly paid only at some distance from the tomb, when friendly and hostile passions have alike grown calm, but indifference has not yet commenced. I had, moreover, a personal motive for reserve. On the last

occasion on which he addressed the House of Commons, on the 28th of June, 1850, the day before the accident occurred which caused his death, Sir Robert Peel, alluding to the miserable quarrel which had arisen, seven years before, between France and England in reference to the affairs of Tahiti, did me the honour to speak of me in terms by which I could not but be, and was, too much affected for my sympathy to appear altogether disinterested. I therefore postponed the accomplishment of my desire. I revert to it now without scruple. Sir Robert Peel has taken his place in history, and nowhere has his memory greater claims than in this hall.[1] That which is the study of your lives, gentlemen, was the practice of his. Of the truths which you labour to disseminate, he made laws for his country. You aim at establishing the political sciences; he introduced them into government.

Not that Sir Robert Peel was a theorist, a philosopher governed by general ideas and abstract principles. He was, on the contrary, a man of essentially practical mind, consulting facts at every step just as the mariner consults the face of heaven, seeking success above all things, and prudent even to circumspectness. But if he was not the servant of principles, neither was he their detractor; he respected political philosophy without adoring it, believing it to be neither sovereign nor futile, and equally a stranger to the insane confidence of those who pretend to regulate all

[1] Some part of this essay was read before the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques.

things according to the bent of their own mind, and to the impertinence of those who affect to despise the human mind, as if they themselves had some other.

'The wise and glorious counsellor of a free people:' thus, after his death, was he designated in his own country. And I will add: he was as fortunate as glorious—fortunate in his last moments as through the whole course of his life, notwithstanding the lamentable accident which so fatally terminated it. For forty years Sir Robert Peel stood in the political arena, always fighting and most frequently victorious. On the eve of his death he still stood erect, but at peace, in his place in Parliament, shedding the light of his wisdom, without opposition, over the politics of his country, and serenely enjoying his ascendency, which all recognised. He died lamented both by his sovereign and by the people—respected and admired by the adversaries whom he had overcome as well as by the friends who had conquered with him.

God seldom accords to a man so many favours. He had endowed Sir Robert Peel, at his birth, with the gifts of intellect as well as the gifts of fortune. He had placed him in an age when his great qualities could be employed with success on great objects. When success was achieved, He recalled him suddenly to Himself, in the fulness of his strength and glory, like a noble workman who has performed his task before the close of the day, and who goes to receive his final reward from the master whom he has well served.

What a time was that at which Sir Robert Peel entered political life! Our fathers, who beheld the

dawn of that time, thought it already very great, and proudly applauded themselves on its greatness. It has infinitely surpassed their expectation. The shock given to human societies in 1789 has extended, aggravated, transformed, and renewed itself beyond all foresight, all imagination. Each successive generation since that period has believed itself to have reached the term of the crisis, and all have been forced to acknowledge that they had not suspected its power—all have resumed, voluntarily or involuntarily, their course towards an unknown future. And we ourselves, after sixty years of change and trial, driven suddenly back on that ocean from which no land can be seen—can we now say, under the shelter of our new respite, towards what abysses or what havens we may yet be hurried by the great wind of 1789, so often lulled but never exhausted?

When a man enters upon life at such a period, the choice which he must make between the principles and the parties which he finds in conflict is a formidable trial. So many great truths confusedly commingled with so many hateful errors,—so many generous innovations opposed to so many respectable traditions,—the spirit of order and the spirit of liberty, those two great moral forces, blindly contending with one another—legitimate sympathy with the progress of humanity, and just distrust of its haughty weakness; what allurements and alarms, what fascinations and perplexities, do these present to great minds and noble hearts!

They inevitably divide themselves between these

two principles—movement and resistance. It was the fortune of England in 1789 that, for more than a century, these two principles had been incorporated and organized in two great political parties which had in turn been intrusted and familiarized with the government of their country. The controlled and contested exercise of power teaches wisdom, and it is in governing others that a man best learns to govern himself. In France, in 1789, we had passionate friends and terrified opponents of liberty and social progress, both equally swayed, without experience or moderation, by their desires or their terrors. England had Whigs and Tories accustomed to regulate themselves while combating their rivals. Political freedom preserved her from revolution.

Born on the 5th of February, 1788,[1] Robert Peel, at his birth, had his share in this happy privilege of his country; he was spared the necessity of choosing his political creed and party for himself. He was born a Tory. Not that he belonged to one of those great families in which political opinions and duties are handed down from father to son as a portion of the property and honour of the house. He was sprung from an old plebeian family, of Saxon origin, established first in Yorkshire, afterwards in Lancashire, and engaged successively in agriculture and manufactures. His grandfather commenced, and his father completed, a large fortune as a cotton-spinner,

[1] In a cottage adjoining Chamber Hall, his father's house, (which happened at that time to be undergoing repair,) in the neighbourhood of Bury, in Lancashire.

and when, in 1790, the first Sir Robert Peel entered the House of Commons for the first time, as the representative of the little borough of Tamworth, which, since that period, has been represented in turn by the father, the son, and the grandson, he was one of the wealthiest as well as one of the ablest manufacturers in England. As honest as he was rich, he regarded the revolutionary movement with equal dislike and alarm, joined zealously with the party who were opposed to it, and placed his wealth and his character, his apprehensions and his courage, at the service of Mr. Pitt. On the 11th of December, 1792, he got up a great meeting of masters and workmen at Manchester, for the purpose of forming an association for the maintenance of legal and constitutional order, and in the course of the proceedings he is reported to have said, 'It is time for the people to rouse from their lethargy, for there are incendiaries in the country.' The Conservative mob whom he addressed, before dispersing, committed some outrages, which were severely denounced in the House of Commons by a young Liberal aristocrat, Mr. (afterwards Earl) Grey. Mr. Peel vindicated his friends the workmen, and when called upon to name the incendiaries whom he had stigmatized, disclaimed having said anything more than 'God save the king!' The great majority of the population of Manchester rallied round him: 'As to party among them,' says one of the biographers of his son, 'there was once a division—one party was called Pittites, and the other Foxites, but that ceased, all coalesced, and called themselves Kingites.'

But it was not enough for Mr. Peel to make his son a Tory; his ambition and confidence soared higher; 'he had a presentiment,' said Cobbett the demagogue of him, 'that he should found a family.' This commoner, who had grown rich by labour and economy, could made great sacrifices for his cause, and pursue with patience his schemes of aggrandizement for his children. He one day contributed ten thousand pounds to a subscription which was opened for the support of Mr. Pitt's policy; and, as it were, consecrated his son, from his childhood, to be not merely, like himself, a partizan, but a continuator of Mr. Pitt—another great minister devoted to the service of the conservative principles and interests of his country. He pursued the accomplishment of this desire with such persevering earnestness that every Sunday, on his return from church, he made his son stand on a table and repeat the sermon which he had just heard: thinking that he could not too soon accustom him to those severe exercises of memory and speech, which aid so effectually in forming the great orator. What various and conflicting sentiments would have agitated Mr. Peel, could he have looked into the future and seen his son as great and powerful as he could ever have ventured to wish him to be, and yet often making a very different use of his power from that which his father would have desired! How striking an example of the conflicts waged, in families as well as in States, between the spirit of tradition and the spirit of liberty, and also of the disappointments which may be united, in the heart of a father,

with the most splendid satisfactions of paternal pride!

At a very early period, young Peel gave reason for the belief that his father's ambition and confidence would not be deceived. During the whole course of his education, at Harrow School and at the University of Oxford, his labours and successes led men to predict for him a brilliant destiny. 'Peel, the orator and statesman,' says Lord Byron in his Memoirs, 'was my form-fellow; we were on good terms, but his brother was my intimate friend. There were always great hopes of Peel amongst us all, masters and scholars, and he has not disappointed them. As a scholar, he was greatly my superior; as a declaimer and actor, I was reckoned at least his equal. As a schoolboy, out of school, I was always in scrapes, and he never. In school, he always knew his lesson, and I rarely; but when I knew it, I knew it nearly as well. In general information, history, &c., I think I was his superior, as well as of most boys of my standing.' At the University of Oxford, where he took his degree, young Peel obtained what was then an almost unexampled honour,—he was in the first class in mathematics as well as in classics. As soon as he left the University, his father, who did not wish to lose a day of the future to which he aspired for him, secured the vacant seat for the borough of Cashel in Ireland; and in 1809, when he was just twenty-one years of age, Robert Peel entered the House of Commons.

CHAPTER II.

'The Last Will of a Patriot.'—State of the House of Commons when Mr. Peel entered.—Reign of the Tory Party.—Catholic Emancipation.—Mr. Peel becomes Member for Oxford.—Opposite Views of Mr. Peel and his Father on the question of the resumption of Cash Payments.—Mr. Peel opposes Catholic Emancipation.—Sir James Mackintosh.

SCARCELY had he taken his seat, when the future which was predicted for him was made a subject of public sarcasm. A pamphlet was circulated, entitled 'The Last Will and Testament of a Patriot,' in which the author amused himself by bequeathing to the principal political men of the period the qualities of which he thought they stood in greatest need. 'I give and bequeath,' he said, 'my patience to Mr. Robert Peel; he will want it all before he becomes prime minister of England; but in the event of such a contingency, my patience is to revert to the people of England, who will stand sadly in want of it.' There was some pretext for this disdainful irony; the predicted prime minister had made his début with indifferent talent and success. The great masters of politics and eloquence, Pitt, Fox, and Burke, were no longer alive;

but, both in and out of Parliament, the public, still thrilling with the recollection of their mighty conflicts, remained impassioned and hard to please; their seconds, Grattan, Sheridan, Tierney, Romilly, Windham, and most of all, Canning, still held brilliant possession of the stage. Brougham had just entered the House. More judicious than energetic, and more lucid than impetuous, Robert Peel did not, at the first onset, win his due renown and rank in the opinion of the mass of spectators.

The men engaged in the government and business of the country appreciated him more truly. Mr. Perceval, then prime minister, hastened to atttach him to the administration as Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. Two years afterwards, in 1812, Lord Liverpool, who had succeeded to the premiership, appointed him Chief Secretary for Ireland; and in 1821, he became Secretary of State for the Home Department, which office he held until the fall of the Liverpool Cabinet in 1827. Thus, for seventeen years, and from his very entrance into public life, he was the constant defender and an active member of the Government.

The first twelve years of this period, namely, until the suicide of Lord Castlereagh in 1822, were marked by the most absolute reign of the Tory party —of Tories far stricter than their master, Mr. Pitt, had ever been. Superficial thinkers have expressed surprise at this. Peace and pacific Governments had been re-established throughout Europe; the external or internal dangers by which England had been

threatened, no longer existed; the causes which had led her rulers to hold the reins of power with a tight hand had either disappeared or were greatly lessened: it seemed right that power should relax its grasp; but effects long survive their causes. Though the Tory system no longer appeared equally indispensable, the Tory party was not less the victorious and dominant party, everywhere in possession of the preponderance, and with a powerful organization to retain it. This is the natural course of government; power goes, by its own inclination, to the men who love it and sustain it with the greatest ardour. England, moreover, remained closely united with the absolute monarchies of the Continent: during the hard trials of the coalition, her rulers had contracted with their rulers those bonds of common thoughts, interests, and habits, which are created by common struggles and successes; her foreign policy influenced her home administration; and Lord Castlereagh was more inclined to assimilate himself with Prince Metternich than to seek to be distinguished from him. Unfortunately for the reviving spirit of liberty, the revolutionary spirit was also reviving, diffusing its venom through institutions as well as through men's souls, and keeping governments everywhere on the alert. During these twelve years of peace, England found her government more anxious, more immovable, and more inaccessible to any reform and any liberal innovation, than it had been when the war was at its height, during its greatest efforts and its greatest dangers.

Robert Peel unhesitatingly associated himself with this policy; and, on all occasions, in his government of Ireland as well as in the debates in Parliament, he supported it with sincere conviction; but rather as a man supports the established order, the law of the country, the actual necessity, than from attachment to systematic and fixed principles. Ardent and constantly-recurring public discussion leads men, whether they belong to the government or to the opposition, beyond their real opinions; their words transcend not merely their intentions but their very acts, and spectators, deceived by these appearances, cease to make any distinction between the actors; they ascribe the same ideas, the same passions, and the same designs to all who serve under the same flag. Like the inflexible Lord Chancellor Eldon, Mr. Peel defended the exclusive domination of the English race and of the Anglican Church in Ireland: in this conflict he became the special opponent of Mr. O'Connell, and the object of his most vehement invectives; and Sir James Mackintosh was able to write, in 1817, after an important debate on the question of Catholic emancipation: 'Peel made a speech of little merit, but elegantly and clearly expressed, and so well delivered as to be applauded to excess. He is a great proof of the value of the mechanical parts of speaking, when combined with industry and education. He now fills the important place of spokesman to the intolerant faction.' On reading Mr. Peel's speech at the present day, we can feel no astonishment at this severe remark, so positive is his language against the emancipation of

the Catholics, and so thoroughly in accordance with the prejudices of their adversaries. And yet, on looking closely into it, we feel that beneath this language, in the mind of the speaker himself, there lies no absolute or irrevocable determination. It was in the name of a moral principle, religious liberty, that the emancipation of the Catholics was demanded; it is in the name of a social danger, of a danger to England, that Mr. Peel rejects the demand: he regards it as actually impossible, not as essentially illegitimate; let the danger cease, or let there be more danger in refusing emancipation than in granting it, and Mr. Peel may yield. He will be accused of belying himself, and he will be unable to complain of the accusation with a good grace; but before the tribunal of his own conscience, he will stand acquitted of having either abandoned a principle or proved false to his faith.

In practice, Mr. Peel strove to alleviate the harsh system of which he defended the maintenance in Ireland. Detesting brutal violence, whoever might be its authors or its victims, he established in those counties which were a prey to agrarian outrages, against which oppression alone was usually put in force, special magistrates and a regular police, which succeeded so well, that even to this day its agents, throughout nearly the whole of Ireland, are called Peelers. In the administration of justice, and in personal questions, he endeavoured to be more impartial than the Orange spirit of faction was willing to permit. He manifested a strong and constant interest in popular education in Ireland, favouring the establishment of Catholic

schools and colleges, and availing himself of the opportunity afforded by the debates on this subject, to speak of the Irish people with a kindly esteem which was far from being an habitual characteristic of the language of their masters. The friends of Ireland, the advocates of emancipation, were not unmoved by this, and in 1821 the most eloquent among them, Mr. Plunket, specially addressing his speech to Mr. Peel, said: 'In selecting the right honourable member, I assure him I do it with all the respect due to his talents, to his acquirements, to his integrity, and to his high principles, as a statesman and a gentleman. I am well aware that there is no statesman likely to become more influential on this subject, and I may add, that there is no person whose adherence to what I must call unfounded prejudices, is likely to work more serious injury to the country.' Serious and sincere courtesy is pleasant from a worthy adversary, and Mr. Peel was courteous in his turn; but residence in Ireland soon became unbearable to him; it was a painful thing to have constantly before his eyes the abuses and evils which he defended. An unexpected occurrence enabled him to escape from this position; in 1817, the representation of Oxford University in the House of Commons became vacant. Mr. Canning earnestly desired the honour of this seat, but Canning was the eloquent defender of Catholic emancipation: the ministry and the Anglican Church put forward Mr. Peel in opposition to him; he was elected without difficulty, and a few months after this success, which pledged him still more thoroughly to the cause of

English Toryism in Ireland, he resigned his post of Chief Secretary at Dublin, and returned to England to devote himself exclusively to Parliamentary conflicts.

He was soon called upon to undergo a trial, which was destined to be, on more than one occasion, the distinctive trial of his life, and to form its principal and original characteristic; he had to renounce his former opinions, and sever himself from his friends; and, on this occasion, the friend from whom he differed was his father. In 1797, the Bank of England had been authorized to decline to give cash for its notes; and the first Sir Robert Peel had warmly supported this measure of Mr. Pitt, which, it was said, had been suggested by the necessities of the moment, but which, in a few years, had led to a great increase in the quantity of notes, and to a considerable depreciation of their value. In 1811, a Committee of the House of Commons, presided over by Mr. Horner, and supported by Mr. Ricardo, proposed to direct the Bank to resume cash payments for its notes, at the end of two years; but, notwithstanding the talent of the chairman, the eloquence of Canning, and the progress of public good sense on the subject, Lord Liverpool's cabinet, supported by the indomitable obstinacy of the old friends of Mr. Pitt, succeeded in negativing the propositions of the Committee; and young Peel voted, like his father, with the Government. The question was again brought under discussion in 1819. Horner was dead, and Robert Peel was appointed Chairman of the Committee in his place. On the

24th of May, when he was about to make his report to the House, proposing the resumption of cash payments by the Bank, his father rose, and presented a petition from the merchants of London against this measure. 'To-night,' he said, 'I shall have to oppose a very near and dear relation. But while it is my own sentiment that I have a duty to perform, I respect those who do theirs, and who consider that duty to be paramount to all other considerations. Some gentlemen were rather indignant at my mentioning the name of Mr. Pitt, at a meeting which I lately attended. My own impression is certainly a strong one in his favour. I always thought him the first man in the country. We all have some bias; and I shall not quarrel with those who prefer some other name. I well remember when the near and dear relation to whom I have alluded was a child, I observed to some friends, that the man who discharged his duty to his country in the manner in which Mr. Pitt had, was most to be admired, and most to be imitated; and I thought at that moment, if my own life and that of my dear relation were spared, I would one day present him to his country, to follow in the same path. I am well satisfied that his head and heart are in the right place; and though, in this instance he has deviated a little from the path of propriety, I hope he will soon be restored to it.' The father resumed his seat, the son rose. 'Many difficulties,' he said, 'have presented themselves to me in discussing this question. Among them is one which it pains me to observe; and that is, the necessity I

feel of opposing myself to an authority to which I have always bowed, and I hope always shall bow with deference. But here I have a great public duty imposed on me, and from that duty I may not shrink, whatever may be my private feelings. . . . . I am free to say that, in consequence of the evidence given to the Committee, and the discussions upon it, my opinion, with regard to this question, has undergone a material change. My views of the subject were most materially different when, in 1811, I voted against the resolutions brought forward by Mr. Horner. But I have no hesitation in saying that, although if it were again before the House, I should probably vote in opposition to the practical measure then recommended, I now, with very little modification, concur in the principles laid down in the first fourteen resolutions submitted to the House by that very able and much-lamented individual.'

The House adopted the propositions of the Committee; the Bank itself anticipated by two years the period fixed for the resumption of cash payments; and the first foundations of Mr. Peel's authority in financial matters were laid. A certain number of landed proprietors, who had borrowed largely during the period of depreciation, and whose estates were charged with heavy mortgages, alone complained; Peel had, they said, sacrificed the landed interest to the money power; an early symptom of the accusation which was one day to be brought against him on a far more important occasion, and with infinitely greater vehemence.

Three years had elapsed since his return from Ireland: during this period, though he held no office, he had constantly supported the Government. Lord Liverpool felt the necessity of strengthening his somewhat worn-out administration. Lord Sidmouth, the Home Secretary, who was thoroughly worn out himself, retired from office; and Mr. Peel succeeded him in that important department, to the great satisfaction of the Tory party, who regarded him as their best champion. He had recently, in another debate on Catholic emancipation, persisted in opposing it, and the Tories were all the more grateful to him because he had failed, with them, in his resistance. Supported by the eloquence of Mr. Canning, and by the rising tide of public opinion, the Emancipation Bill had passed the House of Commons, and had been rejected in the House of Lords only by a comparatively small majority. The timidity of its adversaries still more clearly presaged that its success was not far distant. Mr. Peel had opposed it with visible repugnance. 'I am aware,' he said, 'that it is a choice of difficulties; but in my opinion, the arguments for continuing the exclusion overbalance the other arguments. But, whatever decision the House may come to, I shall give it my best acquiescence; and if the measure should be carried, I shall use my earnest endeavours to reconcile the Protestants to it.' When he became Home Secretary, he soon proved still more conciliatory; he offered but slight opposition to the readmission of the Catholic Lords into the House of Peers; he made no objection to admitting the English

Catholics to the same electoral rights as were enjoyed by the Roman Catholics in Ireland; and he was highly favourable (and that without any view to tyrannical or astute Protestant propagandism) to every measure calculated to advance the progress of popular education in Ireland. 'The opinions which I entertain on the Catholic question,' he said, 'have never prejudiced my views as to the necessity of education generally. I had rather that the Catholic population should be enlightened than ignorant, and I would extend education to all parties without reference to the religion of any.' This moderation and liberality offended his Tory friends, and his Whig antagonists made it a ground for questioning whether his official opposition to their motions was serious. Peel defended himself from both attacks with sincere and embarrassed earnestness,—equally wounded by the distrust and by the tyranny of his party, whom he was willing neither to betray nor to serve blindly.

To escape from the annoyances of this position, he had one resource which he eagerly embraced; he became a liberal and a reformer on those questions which party-spirit had not inscribed on its banner. Two justly-honoured Whigs, Sir Samuel Romilly and Sir James Mackintosh, had, on various occasions, proposed salutary reforms in the penal laws of England; but they belonged to the opposition, their politics were suspected, and the still tightly-held reins of power rejected any alleviation of the existing system. The efforts of these philosophic reformers only succeeded in opening up a prospect of reform,

and rendering it possible at some future day by other hands than theirs. Peel had scarcely been Home Secretary for six months, when Sir James Mackintosh proposed to the House of Commons to declare that 'at an early period of the next session, it would take into its most serious consideration the means of increasing the efficacy of the criminal laws, by abating their undue rigour; together with measures for strengthening the police, and for rendering the punishment of transportation and imprisonment more effectual for the purposes of example and reformation.' The Attorney-General, Sir Robert Gifford, opposed the motion; but just as the House was about to divide, Mr. Peel announced that he would himself, in three days, bring forward a bill to provide for the regulation of prison-discipline; the questions of transportation, the improvement of the police, and the penal system generally, would then naturally arise, and on these various subjects he had views which he would request permission to submit to the House. 'If,' he added, 'in the course of the next session, the honourable and learned gentleman should feel disposed to take up the subject in detail, he will not find in me a predetermined opponent.' The House applauded this language, Sir James Mackintosh's motion was adopted as a pledge of speedy reforms, to be pursued in concert with the Government; questions of penal legislation were removed from the arena of party strife, and made the object of calm and unfettered study; facts were collected from all quarters, ideas were matured in all camps, and in less than four

years after this generous agreement, Mr. Peel proposed five bills in succession, destined on the one hand to simplify, consolidate, and explain, and on the other hand to humanize, the penal laws of England, more especially those intended to repress offences against property, and those which entailed the punishment of death. The earnest sincerity, the practical and determined spirit, which presided over this work, and the success which it obtained when the new laws were subjected to the test of application, redounded to the honour of Mr. Peel. A little jealous feeling mingled with the praises of the Whigs, his old antagonists, when they saw him reap the fruit of their long and patient efforts; but public approbation stifled these suggestions of wounded self-love; and it was an oft-repeated saying of the Whig reformers, in reference to Mr. Peel: '*Quoniam talis es, utinam noster esses!*'

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Peel and Mr. Canning.—Character of Canning.—George the Fourth's antipathy to Canning.—Treats him with marked disfavour.—The King and the Duke of Wellington.—Canning's great popularity.—Unpleasant position of Mr. Peel.—The Elections of 1826.—Death of Lord Liverpool.—Canning forms a Cabinet.—His death at the summit of power.

Mr. Peel, meanwhile, was but indifferently satisfied, and made no progress towards that chief post in the government of the State, which was the final object of his ambition, as well as of the predictions of his father and friends. A more brilliant and more popular rival sat by his side, and visibly gained ground in public estimation. This was Mr. Canning, whom in 1822, after the suicide of Lord Castlereagh, Lord Liverpool had introduced into the Cabinet, as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. This appointment had not been made without some difficulty. Although he had entered public life under the patronage of Mr. Pitt, and as a servant of his policy, Mr. Canning inspired the ardent and consistent Tories with but little confidence. A man of free and noble mind, full of impulse, and but little troubled with scruples respect-

ing principles or traditions, and skilful in discerning what concessions must be made to the liberal feelings of the people, in order to gain their favour, he was far better adapted for movement than for resistance, and the flexible innovator was always perceptible behind the eloquent conservative. As an avowed partizan of Catholic emancipation, moreover, he was vehemently rejected by Protestant Toryism. King George IV. also regarded him with antipathy, because he had been one of the favourites of his wife, Queen Caroline, and because, at a later period, he had held conspicuously aloof from the trial which had published abroad the scandals of the royal household. Lord Liverpool, convinced that the Cabinet could not dispense with the talent and influence of Mr. Canning, had endeavoured, but in vain, to induce the King to consent to his appointment. 'I will undertake it,' said the Duke of Wellington, who was accustomed to treat George IV. with a rough and unyielding respect, to which the intimidated monarch always ended by giving way. He yielded on this occasion, and Mr. Canning entered the Cabinet, forced on the Tories by necessity, and on the King by the chief of the Tories, in the name of that necessity.

His position as a member of the Government was difficult and disagreeable. The King revenged himself for having been obliged to admit him, by treating him with marked disfavour. He did not invite him to court, and would but rarely consent even to see him, only once or twice a month, when public business absolutely required it. Nor did Mr. Canning's

colleagues behave to him more graciously or with greater confidence; they contested his proposals, strove to hamper or weaken his foreign policy, and often made him feel that he stood, in the midst of them, an isolated and suspected man. With the Duke of Wellington himself, who had procured his acceptance by the King, his relations were not much better; they were such as might be expected to result from compulsory gratitude for somewhat haughty protection, combined with mutual distrust. Mr. Canning was keenly alive to these unpleasantnesses and difficulties; but at the same time he was conscious of his power, and knew how to use it. As adroit as he was indispensable, and as agreeable in private life as he was powerful in public debate, he took the most intelligent and constant care of his uncertain position. He had devoted friends, some of whom had influence at court, and assisted in restoring him to good terms with the King. In Parliament and among the public he sought and found in the Liberal Opposition that favour which was denied him by the Government party. By his speeches, by his measures, in recognizing the republics of Spanish America, and in protesting boldly, though merely by word, against the entrance of the French army into Spain, he soon effected a change (sooner perhaps than he would have been inclined to do if he had not found it necessary), in the foreign policy of England, and transferred her from the camp of resistance and of European order, into the camp of progress and liberty. At the same time, in questions

unconnected with his department, and more particularly in matters of finance, he displayed a range and pliancy of intellect, a facility in comprehending every subject, and embellishing it by his manner of treatment, an elegance and a splendour of talent, which from day to day, raised him higher in public estimation, and made him the real leader of that Cabinet, in which he was painfully recognized and tolerated as a colleague.

His neighbourhood cost Mr. Peel dear. Though far more influential with his own party than Mr. Canning, and held in higher general estimation, he had neither that splendour and fascination as an orator, nor, as a man, that charm, that seductiveness of character and success, which had gained for his rival public admiration and enthusiastic friends. Justice was done to Mr. Peel, to his zealous and laborious ability, to his solid knowledge of questions and facts, to his sound and practical judgment: he was regarded as an excellent Home Secretary; but he was no longer spoken of as a necessary and speedy head of the Government. He did not descend, but Mr. Canning rose rapidly above him. Some persons went so far as to believe that Mr. Peel himself admitted the fact, and was resigned to occupy the second rank. And this might fairly be said, for nothing in his conduct or in his speeches betrayed the least jealousy or ill-humour on his part. In addition to the natural rectitude and equity of his mind, which would not permit him to underrate the merits and successes even of a rival, he was a man of reserved and susceptible pride,

and had no notion of engaging in doubtful conflicts from mere self-love, or of putting himself forward with premature hastiness. He endured with dignity and modesty the unpleasantness of his position beside Mr. Canning; more than once, perhaps, wounded and grieved in spirit, but calm, patient, and persesevering, as becomes a man of honest and sensible ambition in a free State.

The dissolution of Parliament in 1826 added still further to his difficulties and annoyances. Catholic emancipation was the dominant question in the elections, and excited the public mind more passionately than ever. All, whether opponents or advocates of the measure, rushed into the field as for a decisive conflict. In the attacks which were made upon the Irish people and the Catholic clergy, insult was mingled with violence. The *Times* called the priests 'surpliced ruffians.' In the county of Waterford, the leader of the Anglican Tories, Lord George Beresford, claimed the votes of his tenants almost as a right which he was entitled to exact, and not as a free act on their part. 'The shaft of contempt,' says an Eastern proverb, 'will pierce through the shell of the tortoise;' the humblest Irish peasants were offended, and the liberal Protestants indignant at this assumption. One of the latter, Mr. Villiers Stuart, a descendant of the Earls of Grandison, entered the lists in opposition to Lord George Beresford. 'I wish to see,' he said, 'a tenantry grateful for the kindnesses of a protecting landlord; but there are limits to gratitude as to generosity and other virtues. A nation

cannot be generous with her honour, a woman with her virtue, or a freeholder with his franchise.' Thus supported by a noble outburst of moral equity on the part of a superior, the national and religious feeling gained the victory in Ireland over authority and tradition. Some farmers and a few priests, who persisted in sustaining the cause of their Tory patron, were scouted by the entire population. One of these complaisant priests, on travelling through the county of Waterford to collect the popular contribution which constituted his stipend, obtained only three shillings instead of the fifty or sixty pounds which he had been in the habit of receiving. Mr. Villiers Stuart was elected. Several counties followed this example. In England and Scotland the Catholics gained but few votes; but in Ireland they had gained electoral liberty, and throughout the liberal party in the three kingdoms, there was a strong movement of sympathy and hope. The motion for emancipation had already succeeded in the House of Commons, and might be brought forward again in that House with irresistible force. Filled with alarm, the Protestant Tories closed their ranks, and prepared to redouble their opposition. The Duke of York, who was then very ill, wrote to the King, his brother, to entreat him also to resist by forming an exclusively Protestant Cabinet, which should be firmly resolved to repulse the pretensions of the Catholics and their friends. Lord Liverpool and the Duke of Wellington, to whom George IV. communicated his brother's letter, did not allow themselves to be moved by it; and while they expressed their deter-

mination to oppose emancipation, they in their turn, wrote to the King to dissuade him from forming any exclusive Cabinet, or entering into any irrevocable engagement. It is even said, that, in private conversation, Mr. Peel then told Lord Liverpool, that, in his opinion, it was vain to endeavour to prolong the struggle, and offered to withdraw from the Cabinet until, by more or less extensive concessions, the question had been settled.

But not only did he not retire from the Cabinet, but when the debate on Catholic emancipation was resumed in the new Parliament, he was more stern and uncompromising in his opposition to it than he had ever been before. The Duke of York had just died; the cause of Anglican Toryism seemed greatly weakened. 'Keen as the feelings of regret must be,' said Mr. Peel, 'with which the loss of such associates in feeling is recollected, it is still a matter of consolation to me that I have now an opportunity of showing my adherence to those tenets which I formerly espoused—of showing that, if my opinions are unpopular, I stand by them still, when the influence and authority that might have given them currency is gone, and when it is impossible, I believe, that in the mind of any human being I can stand suspected of pursuing my principles with any view to favour or personal aggrandisement.' This language did not meet with entire credence; it was, on the contrary, a very prevalent opinion, that Mr. Peel, seeing Mr. Canning grow daily in influence with the Liberal party, was anxious, on his side, to secure to himself the firm support of the Tories, in

order to raise himself eventually, by their assistance, to the head of the Government. Mr. Canning, with eloquent dexterity, did not fail to use this suspicious providence to the disadvantage of his rival. 'My right honourable friend, the Secretary for the Home Department,' he said, 'has stated that the troubles and difficulties of Ireland should be met by firmness and decision. Firmness and decision are admirable qualities; but they are virtues or vices according as they are used. I will not take them in the unfavourable sense in which they have been taken generally; for if I did, I should not envy the hand on which would devolve the task of carrying such a system into effect.'

Whatever may have been Mr. Peel's views at this moment, an unexpected incident occurred to deprive him of all chance of power. On the 18th of February, 1827, Lord Liverpool was struck with apoplexy; it became necessary to seek another leader for the Cabinet. Six weeks were spent in uncertainty; should the country pause in the new course which Mr. Canning had opened up, or should it proceed still further? King, ministers, and Parliament; Tories, Whigs, and indifferent politicians; all were perplexed: some eager to resolve the question to their own advantage, others striving to postpone its solution. The Tories would have liked to have the Duke of Wellington as Lord Liverpool's successor; but that the Commander-in-Chief of the Army should be at the same time the head of the Government, was an idea utterly repugnant to constitutional maxims. In the course of the

same morning, the King sent for the Duke of Wellington, Mr. Peel, and Mr. Canning, one after another, in order to consult them. At heart he detested Wellington, as one man detests another by whom he feels he is despised, and with whom he is nevertheless forced to treat. Mr. Peel, whom he esteemed, pleased him but little; he considered him deficient in courtly manners. Canning had progressed greatly in his favour. But neither of the three relieved the King from his embarrassment. It was then proposed to allow the ministers to choose their leader themselves, and from among their own body, as had been done (or very nearly so) in the case of Lord Liverpool; but this would be to rob the Crown of the right of choosing, at least in appearance, its first minister, and to transfer that right to an aristocratic coterie. George IV. did not relish this expedient; Mr. Canning was equally averse to it, knowing well that he would not be chosen; he declared that he would withdraw. From motives of personal dignity or constitutional scruple, Mr. Peel made the same declaration. Forced to decide for himself, the King at length resolved to follow the popular impulse, and directed Mr. Canning to reconstruct the Cabinet. His Tory colleagues, the Duke of Wellington, the Lord Chancellor Eldon, Lords Bathurst, Westmoreland, Melville, and Bexley, and Mr. Peel, at once sent in their resignation. Mr. Canning endeavoured, but without success, to retain some of them; Lord Bexley alone consented to join the new ministry. The King, piqued at this conduct on the part of the Tories,

which, though perfectly legitimate, he regarded as a manœuvre to prevent the free exercise of the prerogative, gave Mr. Canning full permission to select new colleagues wherever he pleased. Canning, in his turn, promised the King to let the Catholic question rest, and to govern generally in the same spirit and with the same caution as Lord Liverpool. Men easily come to an understanding when they are contented with concessions and promises which both parties hope to evade. Canning, thus left at liberty, quickly formed a Cabinet of Liberals, moderate or insignificant Tories, and a few personal friends. The Whigs, very certain that he would rapidly tide towards them, promised him their support; and Mr. Peel, retiring from the administration of affairs with all the important men of his party, entered the ranks of opposition for the first time.

Four months had scarcely elapsed when Mr. Canning, after languishing for some days at the residence of his friend the Duke of Devonshire, under the noble cedars and among the lovely gardens of Chiswick, died in the midst of his triumph, without having done anything with that power which he had won after so many efforts: no great oratorical success had even marked his brief tenure of office. Attacked in the House of Peers by Lord Grey with haughty and contemptuous violence, he had been but feebly defended by his unskilful and intimidated friends in that House; and he was so much wounded at this, that, for a moment, it is said, he entertained the idea of resigning his seat in the House of Commons, and

obtaining a peerage, that he might have an opportunity of vindicating his policy and honour in the House of Lords. Whether friends or opponents of Mr. Canning, all felt and exhibited a lively emotion at his sudden death. Those who love to look on high grieve to notice the disappearance of a star that has shone in the firmament. Mr. Canning's Cabinet survived him a few months, with Lord Goderich at their head: but their inefficiency soon became evident, and on the 8th of January, 1828, after admitting four of Mr. Canning's colleagues into their ranks, the Tories resumed the reins of government, with the Duke of Wellington as premier, and Mr. Peel as leader of the House of Commons, with the office of Home Secretary.

CHAPTER IV.

The Widow of Canning.—Discontent among Ministers.—O'Connell's eloquence.—Lord Eldon's conviction of defeat on the question of Catholic Emancipation.—Hesitation of Wellington and Peel.—Dismissal of the party of Canning.—Bill for the Relief of Dissenters.—Ministers resolve to propose Catholic Emancipation to Parliament.—Opposition of George IV.—Threatens to leave England.—Peel proposes Emancipation.—Bitter attacks upon Mr. Peel.—Establishment of a Sliding Scale.—The French Revolution of 1830.—England recognises the New French Government.—Reform.—Declaration of the Duke of Wellington against Reform.—Royal Visit to the City prevented.—Declaration of Mr. Peel.

ALMOST instantaneously a twofold excitement arose; the one internal and unseen, the other external and loudly manifested. The friends of Canning who had remained in the ministry, and Huskisson especially (who was then the most important as well as the most liberal of them all), felt themselves ill at ease; the Tories distrusted them, the Whigs treated them with coldness: Lady Canning, in her passionate grief, bitterly reproached them for having entered into alliance with those whom she called the murderers of her husband. The unpleasantnesses of their social position falsified and embarrassed their political position. Among the Tories themselves, some ill-humour was apparent in the midst of their victory; many of them, and those men of the greatest importance, foresaw that a spirit of concession would be displayed by the Cabinet. The

man who of all others, would have been their surest guarantee against this danger, the old Chancellor, Lord Eldon, had not resumed his place in the government; Lord Lyndhurst had been appointed in his stead. Great astonishment was felt at this: people asked one another why Lord Eldon was not in the ministry, and to this question, which was one day put to himself, Lord Eldon replied with malicious sincerity: 'I don't know why I am not a minister.' Without as yet splitting up the victorious party, these personal discontents, and those ill-concealed anxieties kept it in a state of painful agitation.

Out of doors, a violent and ably-organized opposition raged. While Mr. Canning was prime minister, the Irish Catholics had made no noise, for they hoped in him, and were careful not to hamper the good intentions of the Government by awakening popular alarm; but as soon as they saw the Tories once more at the head of affairs, they renewed the conflict with passionate vehemence: the Catholic Association recommenced its public meetings, its harangues, its addresses, its pamphlets, its subscriptions, all its ardent and well-planned labours, in order to arouse and to discipline the people in Ireland,—and in England, to intimidate its enemies, and to encourage and recruit its partizans. Two men of very unequal power, but both of them powerful by very different means and on very different stages of action, O'Connell and Moore, marched at the head of this crusade for the emancipation of their creed and race; O'Connell, a robust and audacious political athlete, an ingenious

and wary lawyer, endowed with an untiring eloquence that could be by turns splendid or vulgar, enthralling or amusing, and devoted with unscrupulous ardour to the cause which was the source at once of his glory and his fortune; Moore, a patriotic and fashionable, pathetic and satirical poet, as popular in the drawing-rooms of London as O'Connell in the monster meetings in Ireland, singing his melodies while O'Connell was pouring forth his invectives; both, by their common yet separate efforts, uniting in the service of the same design the common people and the fashionable world, fiery passions and lofty ideas, man's ambition and woman's sympathy, Celtic peasants and Saxon aristocrats, Catholic priests and Whig philosophers. The grandeur of the effect corresponded with the earnestness of the effort; the county of Clare elected O'Connell to a seat in that House of Commons from which the law excluded him; Ireland rose and remained still at his voice, at one time dashing forward to the last boundaries of legal order, at another time docile and prompt to return within them. In England, among the various classes of lay society, and even in the Anglican Church itself, feelings and presentiments favourable to the Catholics daily gained ground. As obstinate in its apprehension as sincere in its faith, Protestant Toryism still struggled, but felt and showed that it was growing weaker; Orange assemblies in Ireland feebly maintained the conflict against the meetings of the Catholic Association, and in the House of Lords, Lord Eldon himself lost confidence: 'We shall fight,' he wrote, 'respectably and honour-

ably, but we shall be in a wretched minority; but what is most calamitous of all is that the Archbishops and several Bishops are against us.'

The two leaders of the Cabinet, Wellington and Peel, watched this agitated progress of the public mind with perplexed attention. Perhaps they had not yet taken their final resolution, but they assuredly foresaw that it must come to pass, and fully appreciated its importance. The question which they had to solve was not, though attempts were often made to give it that aspect, a question of religious liberty. Thanks to the progress of public reason in a state of Christian civilization, the free exercise of Dissenting creeds and forms of worship, whether Protestant or Catholic, was no longer at issue; it was equality of political rights for all religious sects that was demanded. It was sought to separate civil society from religious society, and to declare that, politically, no regard should be had to the religious belief of citizens: and it was in the midst of a society, the whole political establishment of which—royalty, Parliament, and legislation,—was exclusively Protestant, that this declaration was to be made, and to become law. 'If this principle be correct,' said Lord Eldon, 'that religious opinions have nothing to do with politics, the King has no right to be upon the throne of these realms, for he sits upon that throne by virtue and in consequence of peculiar religious opinions.' If this had been merely a philosophical argument, Wellington and Peel would probably have been but little impressed by it; but it was an argument expressing a

powerful, ancient, legal, national fact, and they hesitated to attack it. Their hesitation was the greater because, until then, they had, in the name of the law and of the safety of the country, themselves defended and maintained this great fact. It is a hard task for a man to be obliged to disavow himself in order to change the constitution of his country! As soon as the debate commenced, ironical insult to persons was mingled with the conflict of principles. Lord Eldon had presented to the House of Lords a petition from the tailors of Glasgow against emancipation. 'What!' said Lord Lyndhurst, 'do the tailors trouble themselves about such measures?' 'No wonder,' answered Lord Eldon; 'you can't suppose that tailors like turncoats.'

Before openly adopting this great and bitter determination, the ministry took two measures which, though apparently postponing it, in reality prepared the way for its reception; they accepted after some slight opposition, a bill brought forward by Lord John Russell for relieving Protestant Dissenters from the political disabilities under which they lay in consequence of the exaction of an oath contrary to their religious belief; and they eagerly seized an opportunity of removing from the Cabinet the four Canningites who had retained seats in it, viz., Mr. Huskisson, Lord Palmerston, Lord Dudley, and Mr. Charles Grant, and of supplying their places with Tories. They thus manifested their anxious desire to rally all Protestants beneath the same standard, and to restore unity of principles and purpose in the government.

The bill for the relief of the Dissenters was carried, in both Houses, by a large majority, but the opposition were under no mistake as to its bearing. 'Sooner or later,' said Lord Eldon, 'perhaps in this very year, almost certainly in the next, the concessions to the Dissenters must be followed by the like concessions to the Roman Catholics. That seems unavoidable, though at present the policy is to conceal this additional purpose.' When the Cabinet was entirely composed of Tories; when the Viceroy of Ireland, Lord Anglesea, who had openly declared himself in favour of the Catholics, had been recalled and replaced by the Duke of Northumberland, a decided Tory; when the Duke of Wellington and Mr. Peel thought themselves in a position to affirm that the emancipation of the Catholics was not a concession extorted by the opposition from the internal dissensions and weakness of the government, but a necessary act, imperatively required by the public peace,—they resolved to propose it to Parliament.

It was not without difficulty that they obtained the King's assent to the measure; not that George IV. was, like his father George III., a serious and conscientious prince, who resisted from conviction and as a matter of duty; but it was a tradition, common alike to King and people, that the safety of the House of Hanover depended on the maintenance of the Protestant establishment. He was moreover a great actor, and took delight in concealing his carelessness or weakness beneath the most emphatic demonstrations. He affected to be desirous of forming another Cabinet.

Not succeeding in this, he sent for Lord Eldon. 'What can I do?' he asked him. 'What can I now fall back upon? I am miserable, wretched; my situation is dreadful. If I do give my assent, I'll go to the baths abroad, and from thence to Hanover. I'll return no more to England. The people shall see that I did not wish this.' In reality, this was all he cared about. When his ministers insisted peremptorily, he grew angry or wept, in order to make it quite evident that they were forcing him. As little moved by his tears as by his rage, and putting but small confidence in his words, they requested him to give them his written authority for the introduction of the bill. He did so after some demur; and on the 5th of March, 1829, Mr. Peel solemnly proposed, in the House of Commons, the abolition of the political and civil disabilities which weighed upon the Catholics.

'I am well aware,' he said, 'that I speak in the presence of a House of Commons, the majority of which is prepared to vote in favour of an adjustment of this question, upon higher grounds than those on which I desire to rest my arguments. . . . I shall abstain from all discussions upon the natural or social rights of man. I shall enter into no disquisitions upon the theories of government. My argument will turn upon a practical view of the present condition of affairs, and upon the consideration, not of what may be said, but of what is to be done, under circumstances of immediate and pressing difficulty. . . . I have for years attempted to maintain the exclusion of Roman Catho-

lics from Parliament, and the high offices of the State. I do not think it was an unnatural or unreasonable struggle. I resign it in consequence of the conviction that it can be no longer advantageously maintained; from believing that there are not adequate materials, or sufficient instruments for its effectual and permanent continuance. I yield therefore to a moral necessity which I cannot control; unwilling to push resistance to a point which might endanger the establishments that I wish to defend. Does that moral necessity exist? Is there more danger in continued resistance than in concession accompanied with measures of restriction and precaution? My object is to prove, by argument, the affirmative answer to these questions.'

And these were in fact, as far as Mr. Peel was concerned, the limits of the debate. He departed from them only in his own defence. Two cruel charges were brought against him—tergiversation and fear. He repelled them with candid and high-minded good sense. 'I cannot,' he said, 'purchase the support of my honourable friends, by promising to adhere at all times, and at all hazards, as minister of the Crown, to arguments and opinions which I may have heretofore propounded in this House. I reserve to myself distinctly and unequivocally the right of adapting my conduct to the exigency of the moment, and to the wants of the country. . . This has been the conduct of all former statesmen, at all times and in all countries. My defence is the same with that of all others under similar circumstances, and I shall conclude by expressing it in words more beautiful than

any which I myself could use—I mean the words of Cicero—*Hæc didici, hæc vidi, hæc scripta legi, hæc de sapientissimis et clarissimis viris, et in hac republicâ et in aliis civitatibus monumenta nobis litteræ prodiderunt, non semper easdem sententias ab iisdem sed quascunque reipublicæ status, temporum inclinatio, ratio concordiæ postularent, esse defendendas.*' And with regard to the charge of yielding to intimidation: 'In my opinion,' he said, 'no motive can be more justly branded as ignominious than that which is usually termed cowardice. But there is a temper of mind much more dangerous than this, though it may not be so base—I mean the fear of being thought to be afraid. Base as a coward is, the man who abandons himself to the fear of being thought a coward, displays little more fortitude. His Majesty's ministers are not, and have not been, afraid of the Catholic Association. Their attempts were not matters to strike his Majesty's ministers with fear. . . . But fear is by no means inconsistent with the character *constantis viri*: there are many subjects which it might be impossible for him to contemplate without dread; there are many views from which he may be justified in shrinking. And I would tell my honourable friends that the disorganization and disaffection which exist in Ireland cannot be looked upon without fear, and that to affect not to fear them would be to affect insensibility to the welfare of the country.'

The issue of the conflict was not doubtful; Peel had entered into the lists only under the pressure of necessity, and with the certainty of success; but his

adversaries, having nothing to gain by moderation, denied themselves no weapon by which they could wound him, and abstained from none of the cruel delights of war. On changing his policy, he had loyally resigned his seat in the House of Commons as one of the representatives of the University of Oxford, not without the secret hope of regaining it by a new election; but he was defeated. More than once he was reminded, with poignant derision, of his opposition to Mr. Canning, that glorious rival from whom he had now stolen both his policy and the honour of victory. A caricature was widely circulated, representing Canning coming forth from his tomb, and pursuing Wellington and Peel with these exulting words, 'I am avenged!' A vulgar enemy even went so far as to intimate that Mr. Peel had changed his opinion only in order that he might retain the emoluments of his office. 'Good God!' exclaimed Peel indignantly, 'I cannot argue with the man who can place the sacrifice of office or emolument in competition with the severe, the painful sacrifice which I have made.' And when the debate drew near its close, with his heart torn by the recollections of Canning which had so often been invoked against him, he said: 'One parting word, and I have done. Testimonies of approbation which are grateful to my soul, have been liberally awarded to me by gentlemen on the other side of the House, in a manner which does honour to the forbearance of party among us. They have, however, one and all, awarded to me a credit which I do not deserve for settling this question. The credit belongs to others,

and not to me. It belongs to Mr. Fox, to Mr. Grattan, to Mr. Plunket, to the gentlemen opposite, and to an illustrious friend of mine, who is now no more. I will not conceal from the House that, in the course of this debate, allusions have been made to the memory of my right honourable friend, now no more, which have been most painful to my feelings. . . . I was on terms of the most friendly intimacy with my right honourable friend down even to the day of his death; and I say with as much sincerity of heart as man can speak, that I wish he were now alive to reap the harvest which he sowed, and to enjoy the triumph which his exertions gained. I would say of him as he said of the late Mr. Perceval—Would he were here to enjoy the fruit of his victory!—

'Tuque tuis armis, nos te poteremur, Achille.'

Notwithstanding the painfulness of the conflict, the happy accomplishment of this great measure left a profound feeling of patriotic joy and just pride in the soul of Mr. Peel. 'I see in the condition of Ireland,' he said a short time afterwards, 'the elements of future religious peace and national prosperity. The upper classes of society are falling into an oblivion of past animosities as rapidly as can be expected in so short a time, and the example of those classes is fast extending through the great body of society. Deeply as I regret the loss of the confidence which a portion of the members of this House have withdrawn from his Majesty's Government, and clearly as I foresee the possible consequences which the combination of parties may lead to, I yet cannot purchase their confidence

by expressing a regret for what has occurred. I say this with no feeling of hostility or asperity. I had at the outset a perfect knowledge of the painful consequences which might arise to me individually, and in my public capacity, from proposing the measure of Catholic emancipation; but if the business were to be transacted over again—with still greater deliberation and determination, and with increased preparation to make any personal sacrifice that might be necessary —I would this very night give notice of a motion for the introduction of such a measure.'

About the same period he brought forward and carried through two other reforms, of less magnitude and difficulty, but which nevertheless met with great opposition. For the absolute prohibition of foreign corn he substituted the system of the sliding scale, that is to say, of a variable duty on grain imported from abroad, regulated by the price of grain grown at home. He also established in London and its vicinity that system of municipal police which is now adopted in nearly all the towns of England.

In accomplishing the first of these reforms, and although it was a step in the direction of Free Trade, he doubtless did not foresee how far it would one day lead him, or he would probably have spoken with a little more reserve than he did, when he said: 'Under the present state of society in this country, and considering the vast amount of property employed in the cultivation of land, as well as with reference to the other interests of the community, it is impossible for the House to apply any rigid abstract principles to

the settlement of this question. There are other considerations to be attended to besides that of vested interests. Under a limited monarchy like this, it is of importance to maintain those interests which render so much assistance to the Government and to the State. And I should be sorry to purchase a depression of the price of bread at the risk of interfering injuriously with those vested interests which are so essential to the maintenance of the other classes of the State.' Compelled to speak and to act every day, the most prudent ministers do not always succeed in doing nothing and in saying nothing but that which is equally suited to the necessities of the present, and the possibilities of the future.

Notwithstanding its evident utility, the Bill for the establishment of the new municipal police, met with vehement opposition from the blind adorers of the past. A military Cabinet, it was said, desired to introduce into England the despotic police of the Continental States, with their domestic espionage. Influential newspapers lamented to see the ancient order of watchmen mercilessly abolished. An address was presented to King George IV., conjuring him to open his eyes, to call upon the name of the Lord, and to rally his people around him, for a plot had been formed to overthrow the House of Hanover, and to place the Duke of Wellington on the throne, by the assistance of the Irish Catholics who were to be enrolled in the police. Peoples are in turn affected by terrors and hopes of equal puerility and folly.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet succeeded in all it under-

took; it gained great parliamentary victories, it accomplished great social reforms, and yet, instead of growing stronger, it was becoming weaker; it triumphed only by the aid of its former adversaries, and every triumph lost it some of its old friends. Hesitation and confusion found their way into those powerful political parties, which had so long been disciplined and faithful under their banner. The Whigs marched, with ironical smiles, in the train of Wellington and Peel; of the Tories, some separated from them with sorrow or anger, while others followed them with anxiety. 'Peel has no pluck,' it was said; 'he can't make head against those who are pushing him forward.' Mr. Peel himself, sometimes seemed rather embarrassed by his position; either from necessity, or from design, he did not carry out with vigour, in the administration of Ireland, the liberal consequences of Catholic emancipation; he left the Orangemen all their power; and he took care that the Duke of Wellington should continue to be, in the eyes of the public, the head of the Cabinet, as if desirous to shelter himself under the protection of a name more imposing than his own. In the midst of its triumphs, the governing power was inert and tottering.

The French revolution of 1830 brought this state of things to light, and hastened its catastrophe. When the first report of it reached London, and when nothing was known beyond the ordinances of July, some one asked the Duke of Wellington: 'What are we to think of this?' 'It is a new dynasty,' answered the Duke. 'And what course shall you take?' in-

quired his friend. 'First a long silence, and then we will concert with our allies what we shall say.' The Duke of Wellington rightly foresaw what the future of France would be, and wrongly predicated his own conduct in his own country. When the revolution was accomplished, and fully known in all its details, a general and lively sympathy burst forth throughout England; prudent men were alarmed, and rigid Tories blamed; but the public feeling paid little regard to their scruples and their fears. France had just put into practice the principles, and imitated the example, of the Revolution of 1688; England applauded her conduct with enthusiasm; the national movement overcame the dissensions of party and the apprehensions of power. At this very moment, too, the difficulties of the Wellington-Peel Cabinet were greatly increased; they were the servants of a new King—William IV. had just ascended the throne; a new Parliament was soon to meet—the House of Commons had been dissolved three days before the Revolution of July. The Duke of Wellington was able neither 'to keep a long silence,' nor 'to concert with his allies.' He hastened to recognise the new French monarchy, and took upon himself the responsibility of answering, to the new House of Commons which England was electing, for the new policy which this recognition entailed.

He soon felt the full weight of this responsibility. A short time before the death of George IV., Mr. O'Connell had proposed, in the House of Commons, the most radical Parliamentary reform—triennial Par-

liaments, universal suffrage, and vote by ballot. His proposition had been rejected by an immense majority, but the question of reform had remained the question of the day; a motion of Lord John Russell's, calling on the House to declare 'that it was expedient to extend the basis of the representation of the people,' had obtained 117 votes against 213; and, during the course of the autumn, Mr. Peel and the Duke of Wellington himself, while on visits in the country, at Manchester and Birmingham among other places, had not manifested any resolution to oppose every proposition on this subject. The new Parliament had no sooner met than the question was brought forward again, and urged with far greater ardour than ever. On the 2nd of November, 1830, in the debate on the address in answer to the King's speech, Earl Grey, while disavowing radical opinions, declared that he considered a reform of the electoral system as inevitable as it was just, and called on the Government to take steps for effecting it. The Duke of Wellington immediately rose and said: 'I am fully convinced that the country possesses a Legislature which answers all the good purposes of legislation, and this to a greater degree than any Legislature ever has done in any country whatever. I will go further, and say that the Legislature and the system of representation possess, and deservedly possess, the full and entire confidence of the country. I will go still further and say, that if, at the present moment, the duty were imposed on me of forming a Legislature for any country, and particularly for a country like this, in possession

of great property of various descriptions,—I do not mean to assert that I could form such a Legislature as we now possess, for the nature of man is incapable of reaching such excellence at once, but my great endeavour would be to form some description of Legislature which would produce the same results. . . . . Under these circumstances, I am not prepared to bring forward any measure of the description alluded to by the noble Lord. And I am not only not prepared to bring forward any measure of this nature, but I will at once declare that, as far as I am concerned, as long as I hold any station in the Government of the country, I shall always feel it my duty to resist such measures when proposed by others.'

Neither the Opposition in Parliament, nor the public out of doors, nor probably the greater number of the members even of the Cabinet, expected so peremptory a declaration. The irritation of the advocates of reform was extreme, and spread rapidly among the people. King William IV. was to have dined in the City on the 9th of November. It was announced in all directions that violent demonstrations were to take place, that the Duke of Wellington would be seriously insulted, and perhaps menaced; fears were even entertained for the safety of the King himself. The events which had occurred at Paris still inflamed or alarmed men's minds; the popular excitement and the perplexity of the Government increased from hour to hour. The tottering Cabinet would not accept the responsibility of the outbreak, or of the repressive

measures which the King's procession through the streets might occasion. A proclamation was published on the previous evening to announce that the royal visit to the City would not take place. For two days, both Houses resounded with inquiries, explanations, and debates on this subject. The Duke of Wellington defended himself with some embarrassment; Mr. Peel loyally supported him, and endeavoured to hold out some prospect of conciliation; but the Whigs, who felt that victory was in their grasp, had no idea of allowing it to be postponed. On the 15th of November, a proposition made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for the Civil List of the new reign, was rejected by 233 votes against 204; and on the following day, the Duke of Wellington and Mr. Peel respectively announced to the two Houses that the Cabinet had resigned, and that the King had commanded Lord Grey to form an administration.

Among the public, and among the conquerors themselves, many persons would have wished to separate Mr. Peel from the vanquished, and win him over to the cause of reform. He was not, it was said, absolutely opposed to it; the Duke of Wellington's self-willed stubbornness carried him away, and the hatred of the ultra-Tories would not forgive him Catholic emancipation. Mr. Peel repelled all these insinuations, and fell unhesitatingly with his colleagues. He was not silent, however, respecting the causes of their fall; and he prepared to shape his conduct thenceforward according to the dictates of his own mind, and with a view to the great future which had so long been

predicted for him. 'For a year,' he said, immediately after his retirement from office, 'for a year the Government has been stumbling and not making progress. We have alienated the Tories without conciliating the Whigs. The downfal of the Cabinet was inevitable. The Duke, by his declaration against all reform, hastened the catastrophe. The head of the Government ought never to allow his secrets to be discovered. He may do everything he pleases, but he may not say everything. Suppose a ministry is opposed to any reduction of the taxes, it may act on that principle and not reduce taxation; but if it once formally avows the principle, the Cabinet must be overthrown. For my part, my course is clear; I am the enemy only of the Radicals. The Government are equally so; and in that respect I shall support them. For the rest, I shall wait until Ministers make their political profession of faith, and then I shall know whether or not I am opposed to them.'

CHAPTER V.

Parliamentary Reform.—Persevering opposition of Mr. Croker.—Powerful Speech of Mr. Macaulay.—Difficult position of Sir Robert Peel.—Retirement of Lord Grey.—Reconstruction of the Whig Cabinet.

It was not long before he ascertained this. The bill for Parliamentary Reform, proposed by Lord John Russell on the 1st of March, 1831, amid laborious complications and violent storms, occupied for seventeen months, until its final adoption in August, 1832, the passionate attention of the public, as well as of both Houses of Parliament; and during all this time, in every phase of this great conflict, Mr. Peel (who had become Sir Robert Peel by the death of his father), unremittingly opposed the measure. He opposed it as having originated under bad auspices, as excessive in itself, subversive of the constitution of the country, and as sustained by improper means. It was, he said, a reform excited in England by the revolutionary blasts from France, and the triumph of which was sought to be obtained by fomenting revolutionary ideas, passions, and practices among the

people. 'Reform is proposed,' he said, 'whilst the events of the last year in Paris and Brussels are bewildering the judgments of many, and provoking a restless, unquiet disposition, unfit for the calm consideration of such a question. Granted that the resistance to authority in those countries was just; but look at the effects,—on the national property, on industry, on individual happiness,—even of just resistance. . . . . Do not rely upon this temporary excitement; do not allow it to be your only guide. All I ask is, time for deliberation upon a question of such vital importance. . . . . When the steady good sense and reason of the people of England shall return, they will be the first to reproach us with the baseness of having sacrificed the constitution in the vain hope of conciliating the favour of a temporary burst of popular feeling. . . . . It is not making an addition to an existing structure to accommodate an increasing family, but uprooting all the foundations of an ancient edifice, and attempting to construct a new one. . . . . I give my conscientious opposition to this bill, because it does not fulfil the conditions recommended from the throne—because it is not founded on the acknowledged principles of the constitution—because it does not give security to the acknowledged prerogatives of the Crown—because it does not guarantee the legitimate rights, influences, and privileges of both Houses of Parliament—because it is not calculated to render secure and permanent the happiness and prosperity of the people—and, above all, because it subverts a system of government which has

combined security to personal liberty and protection to property, with vigour in the executive power of the State, in a more permanent degree than ever existed in any age, or in any other country in the world. . . . . In taking my present course, I am swayed by no motives of self-interest—I have no borough to protect—I have contracted no obligations to those who possess that influence which the present measure is intended to destroy. . . . . I beg not to be included among those who are charged with making any one observation disparaging to the middle classes of society in this country. I repudiate such a sentiment—sprung as I am from those classes, and proud of my connexion with them. So far am I from underrating their intelligence or influence, that I tell you this,—you who talk of appealing to the people, —that unless these middle classes shall show more prudence, more judgment, and more moderation than their rulers, I shall despair of the destinies of my country. . . . . If the bill proposed by Ministers be carried, it will introduce the very worst and vilest species of despotism—the despotism of demagogues—the despotism of journalism—that despotism which has brought neighbouring countries, once happy and flourishing, to the very brink of ruin and despair.'

It was not among the Tory party alone that these alarms were fomenting: one of the most enlightened and respected men in England, a Whig in principles, and a spectator, as disinterested as he was attentive, of this great debate, wrote to me on the 4th of May, 1831:—'The course of human affairs has long been

urging the nations of western Europe towards democracy; this is the result of the diffusion of wealth and knowledge; but I do not see why it was necessary to hasten forward a change in social order which might have been judiciously regulated, and which, if gradually brought about, would not have been accompanied by the evils which I fear will now flow from it. Every one here admits that a reform in our Parliament, far less extensive than that so lavishly bestowed on us by Ministers, would have been received by the moderate party in the nation with gratitude, and even with some surprise.'

Even among the defenders of the Reform Bill themselves, some, and those not the least eminent, were influenced by these apprehensions, and sought for other motives in order fully to justify the measure. 'If this bill,' said Sir James Mackintosh, 'were exclusively proposed for the amendment of institutions, I might join in the prevalent cry that it goes too far, or at least, travels too fast—farther and faster than the maxims of wise reformation would warrant. But as it is a means of regaining national confidence, I consider the terms of this plan as of less consequence than the temper which it breathes, and the spirit by which it is animated. . . . . The superior classes of society, by giving to the people a signal and conspicuous proof of confidence, may reasonably expect to be trusted by the majority of their countrymen; but to reach this end, they must not only be, but appear to be, liberally just and equitably generous. Confidence can be purchased by confidence alone.'

Against a measure thus seriously disputed, the Opposition seemed to have some chances of success. Many Tories flattered themselves with the hope of victory; and, led by a man of vigorous, clear, precise and practical mind, and of persevering and passionate will, Mr. John Wilson Croker, they strove to seize upon every incident in the debate that was calculated to inflict a severe blow on the Whig Cabinet, to effect its downfal, to restore the Tories to power, and thus to place them in a position, either to procure the failure of the Reform movement, or to substitute for Lord John Russell's bill a measure fraught with less fatal consequences to their party; but Sir Robert Peel had no share in this design; in his heart he did not believe it practicable. The popular feeling in favour of the bill was really very strong; the loftiest minds, the most eloquent orators of England called for reform with earnest conviction, and seemed to regard it as even more indispensable than irresistible.

'Now,' said Mr. Macaulay, 'while everything abroad and at home forebodes ruin to those who persist in a hopeless struggle against the spirit of the age,—now, while the crash of the proudest throne of the Continent is still ringing in our ears,—now, while the roof of a British palace affords an ignominious shelter to the exiled heir of forty kings,—now, while we see on every side ancient institutions subverted, and great societies dissolved,—now, while the heart of England is still sound,—now, while the old feelings and old associations retain a power and a charm which may too soon pass away,—now, in this your accepted time,

—now, in this your day of salvation,—take counsel, not of prejudice, not of party spirit, not of the ignominious pride of a fatal consistency,—but of history, of reason, of the ages which are past, of the signs of this most portentious time;—pronounce in a manner worthy of the expectation with which this great debate has been anticipated, and of the long remembrance which it will leave behind. Renew the youth of the State. Save property, divided against itself. Save the multitude, endangered by their own ungovernable passions. Save the aristocracy, endangered by its own unpopular power. Save the greatest, and fairest, and most highly-civilized community that ever existed, from calamities which may, in a few days, sweep away all the rich heritage of so many ages of wisdom and glory. The danger is terrible,—the time is short. If this bill should be rejected, I pray to God that none of those who concur in rejecting it, may ever remember their votes with unavailing regret, amidst the wreck of laws, the confusion of ranks, the spoliation of property, and the dissolution of social order.'

These sombre prognostics, this powerful language carried some disturbance into the soul of Peel. In general, when he found himself opposed to popular opinion, he was more inclined to overrate than to undervalue its strength, and even while resisting he had but small hopes of overcoming it. But just relieved, moreover, from the embarrassments and unpleasantnesses in which he had been involved by the emancipation of the Catholics, he felt himself

neither able nor willing so soon to repeat the same manœuvre, and to make himself once more, in the name of necessity, the executor of a policy which he had long opposed. His real and inward desire was that the question of Parliamentary reform should be settled by his adversaries, and that he might be able to resume the struggle with them on an arena cleared of so perilous a difficulty. Near the close of this great debate, he was called on clearly to express his views. Triumphant in the House of Commons, the bill was very near rejection in the House of Lords; to secure its adoption, Lord Grey demanded permission of the King to create as many peers as he might judge necessary; otherwise, the Whig ministry must retire. William IV. accepted their resignation, and entered into negotiations with the Tories with a view to their return to office, but on condition that they should make good the King's promise to the people, by bringing forward a Reform Bill equivalent, in all essential particulars, to that proposed by the Whigs. The Duke of Wellington, more bold in action, and less regardful of difficulties and principles, than Sir Robert Peel, was ready to accept the terms. Peel refused:—'I was asked,' he said, 'whether I would accept that office which, in political life, is supposed to be the highest object of ambition. At the same time, it was notified to me that whoever took office must accept it on the condition of introducing an extensive measure of reform. What is the situation in which I stand with respect to reform? I have given it the most strenuous opposition, continued

to the latest moment; and having done that, how could I stand in this place as minister, in order to recommend the adoption of that bill of which I had been the chief opponent? I therefore replied, —I admit upon the impulse of the moment, but upon an impulse which my maturer judgment only served to confirm,—that no authority or example of any man, or any number of men, could shake my resolution not to accept office under existing circumstances, upon such conditions.' After this peremptory refusal of Sir Robert Peel, all the hopes of the Tories vanished; the Whig Cabinet was reconstructed; the majority of its adversaries, by absenting themselves, at the King's request, from the House of Peers, allowed the Reform Bill to pass. This question being thus settled, Parliament was dissolved; the elections gave the Whig and Radical Reformers an immense majority; and on the 5th of February, 1833, Sir Robert Peel entered the new House of Commons, at the head of a little army of vanquished partizans, who hastened to close their ranks around him, in sadness at first, but ere long docile and disciplined under his leadership, as much from necessity as from choice.

CHAPTER VI.

Peel's Speech on the Reform Bill.—Murmurs of the Tories at his conduct.—He becomes Leader of a Party to which he does not belong.—Subserviency of the Whig Cabinet to O'Connell.—Decline of the Whigs.—Character of Lord Durham.—His retirement from office.—Overthrow of the Whigs.—The Duke of Wellington undertakes the entire government.—Return of Sir Robert Peel from Italy.—Dissolution of Parliament.—The hostility of the Whigs in the New House of Commons.—Defeat of the Ministry.—Return of the Whigs under the Premiership of Lord Melbourne.—Dinner to Sir Robert Peel at Merchant Tailors' Hall.—His Policy explained to his supporters.—Defeat of the Whigs.—The Queen sends for Sir Robert Peel.—Character of Lord Melbourne.—The Queen's confidence in him.—Peel desires to have the appointments in the Royal Household.—The Queen's Letter to Sir Robert Peel, and his Reply.—Return of the Whigs to office.—Arrival of M. Guizot in London.—Conversation with Peel.—Peel's sympathy for the Working Classes.—Views of public Policy.—The Elections.—Defeat of the Whigs.—Peel becomes Premier.

At the very opening of the session, in the debate on the address, Sir Robert Peel hastened to make known the line of conduct which he proposed to pursue. 'It is my duty,' he said, 'to support the Crown, and the support I give is dictated by principles perfectly independent and disinterested. I have no other views than to preserve law, order, property, and morality. In the course I am pursuing to-night is to be found an indication of the course I mean to take on future occasions. It is not one adopted, as some may imagine, with a view to recover office. I feel that between me and office there is a wider gulf than there is

perhaps between it and any other man in the House. . . . . I could have wished to give the honourable gentlemen opposite my support from increased confidence in them as public men; but I regret to say that I am unable to do so. I give them my support on public grounds, as ministers of the Crown, who want it. I mean no disrespect to the House; but I think, as I have thought from the beginning, that the great change which has been made in its constitution, requires a change in the conduct of the public men who are disposed to agree with me in politics. . . . . When the House of Commons was divided into two great parties—one of them in power, and the other not, but confident in its principles,—it was natural and right that they should adopt those tactics which might have the effect of displacing their opponents. . . . Circumstances have now changed, and I do not feel myself at liberty, holding the opinions that I do, now to resort to what may have been the necessary and legitimate tactics of party. When I see the Government disposed to maintain the rights of property, the authority of law, and, in a qualified sense, the established order of things against rash innovation, I shall, without regard to party feeling, deem it my duty to range myself on their side. . . . When I say this, I do not admit the justice of those taunts which represent the party with whom I have the honour to act as adverse to all reform. I opposed your plan of Parliamentary reform, because I had a strong confidence in the disposition of the House, as constituted at that time, to consider all useful and safe reforms in our institutions; but I utterly deny that I

have been at any time an enemy to gradual and safe reforms. . . . I will freely own that I fear the tendency of this House is to presume too much that everything established is wrong. I do not doubt the intentions of the majority of this House; but I am apprehensive that they have taken their seats under the impression that the institutions under which they have hitherto lived are grievances that must be abated, and that they entertain too strong a presumption on behalf of our own means of curing them. . . . Three months, I believe, will not pass away without the disappointment of their expectations; it is utterly impossible that they can be fulfilled. . . . . But I have heard with satisfaction, from His Majesty's Government, that although they are determined to redress real grievances, they are also resolved to stand by the constitution of the House of Commons as it now exists, and to resist any experiment which can tend to unsettle the public mind. In this resolve I am determined to support them.'

During two years and two sessions of Parliament, in 1833 and 1834, no incident occurred to disturb Sir Robert Peel in this course of conduct, and he persisted in it with equal consistency and success. Great questions thronged the doors, and filled the interior of both Houses; for England, the reduction of taxation, the reform of municipal corporations, and the introduction of the ballot at elections, were insisted upon; for Ireland, the reform of the Anglican Church and the distribution of its wealth, as well as measures of repression against the sanguinary outrages of which Ireland was still the theatre, and even the repeal of

the union between the two kingdoms and the restoration of their separate Parliaments, were demanded. I can here mention only the more important questions; but all the ideas and all the schemes which, for fifteen years, in drawing-rooms, in newspapers, and in Parliament, had been the topics of the conversations, writings, and speeches of the Whig and Radical opposition, were now brought forward as so many formal propositions claiming to be made laws. With all these questions, as they were successively introduced, Sir Robert Peel was ready to grapple, and brought into the debates a positive opinion, a vast and accurate acquaintance with facts, a tempered eloquence which succeeded in convincing if not in commanding passionate admiration, and that self-reliant, though not expansive authority, which wins confidence even when it does not excite sympathy. He did not confine himself within the absolute principles of the old Tories or within the extreme prerogatives of power; he did not repel every innovation; on the contrary, he proved himself solicitous about the new state of society, and alive to the necessity of granting it the moral satisfactions and material prosperities to which it aspired; but he resolutely defended, against every direct or indirect attack, public and private property, existing rights and laws, the Crown, the Church, and all the foundations of social and national order, boldly inscribing on his banner the maxim that, taken all in all, the institutions of England were good, and English society well regulated, and that every innovation, being on these grounds more deserving of suspicion than of favour, must be passed

through severe trials of discussion and time before it could be admitted at the expense of the established order of things. 'I object to the ballot,' he said, 'because it would make the House more democratic than it is already, and I think it democratic enough. I say so openly. I do not wish to conceal that I think the House of Commons as democratic as is consistent with the principles of the constitution, and with the maintenance of the just authority and undoubted privileges of the other branches of the legislature. It has been said, that the ballot would destroy the influence of property. I will confidently assert, that if the influence of property in elections were destroyed, the security of all property and the stability of all government would be destroyed with it. It is surely absurd to say that a man with ten thousand pounds a year should not have more influence over the legislature of the country than a man with ten pounds a year. Yet each is only entitled to a single vote. How could this injustice, this glaring inequality, be practically redressed excepting by the exercise of influence? How could the government end but in a democracy if the influence were merely according to numbers? I have an additional reason for opposing the motion, and that is, that after the change made in the electoral system last year, another not less extensive change in the system would be most unwise. What! is there never to be any fixedness in the electoral system? Are we to give no opportunity of judging the effect of the change already made? Until there is a strong proof of some practical defect in the system as it at present stands, I shall object to a

change. By a continual series of experiments on the institutions of government, we are depriving ourselves of one of the mainstays of government, one of the chief sources of legitimate power,—respect for, and attachment to, that which is established; and upon this ground alone, I will oppose the motion.'

This enlightened good sense, conservative from uprightness of mind and moral intelligence rather than from interest and tradition, did not give full satisfaction to the ideas or to the passions of the Tories of the old school, and they followed Peel with some uneasiness, occasionally mingled with murmurs, as an indispensable defender, and not as a true representative and a certain guide. In Ireland, especially, the Orangemen would not allow themselves to be restrained or directed by his prudent equity, and by the violence of their language and conduct towards the Catholics, they often caused him as much displeasure as embarrassment. He was thus, in this respect, the leader of a party to which he did not belong, either by his origin, or by his inmost opinions, or by his tastes. In return, his renown and influence with the bulk of the nation, among the middle classes, the clergy, the magistracy, the bar, the men engaged in manufactures and commerce, grew visibly wider and stronger. From day to day, greater confidence was reposed in the prudent honesty of his views, in his financial and administrative ability, in his comprehension of the national interests and his sympathy with the public feelings. With great attention and forethought, he allowed no opportunity to escape of

rendering, either to these classes generally, or to their influential representatives, some important service. By effecting Catholic emancipation, he had offended many members of the Anglican Church in Ireland; but he so vigorously defended, against the dissensions and hesitations of the Whig Cabinet, the inviolability of the property of that Church and its application to pious uses, that they forgot their anger and lent him their full support. An Irish judge of great reputation and integrity, Baron Smith, had sharply attacked the agitators, O'Connell's 'tail,' in a charge to the grand jury of the city of Dublin; and for this he was violently denounced and vituperated in the House of Commons by O'Connell himself. The intimidated Whigs almost gave him up to the vengeance of their tyrannical but necessary ally. Peel manfully undertook his defence, vindicating in his person the independence of the judicial bench and the feeling of the English people, who were indignant at the subserviency of the Cabinet to O'Connell's yoke. Every incident, every question, thus swelled and rallied round Sir Robert Peel that new party of order and government which maintained the principles of authority though not exercising it, repelled the encroachment of the democratic spirit without having an aristocrat at its head, and thought it an honour to be called the Conservative party, as much for the sake of distinction from the old Tory party, as to be able to inscribe its own name on its own standard.

Meanwhile, the Whig Cabinet was a prey to the most annoying embarrassments and to visible decline.

During its long years of opposition, it had promised or given reason to hope for much more than it was able to accomplish in the way of reform and progress; and now that it was in power, far more was required of it even than it had promised. There is no worse condition for a government than to be obliged to deal with hopes that are at once ardent and vague; and no peoples or parties are so difficult to govern as those that have immense desires, without clearly knowing what they desire. If Lord Grey's Cabinet had had no other mission than parliamentary reform, it might have rested with pride, for it had accomplished that work and much more. In Ireland, it had greatly relieved the Catholics by materially modifying the condition of the Anglican Church, and had thrown back on the Protestant proprietors the greater part of the burden of tithes. In Scotland, it had reformed the principal abuses of the municipal system. India and China had been opened to free trade. To her eternal honour, England had abolished slavery in her colonies. This was assuredly an ample harvest of reforms for four years. But the Cabinet had originated in a great fervour of democratic opinion and ambition, excited by the revolution in France. It was urged onwards and supported by a school of philosophic reformers, the Radical disciples of Bentham, sincere friends of justice and humanity, but stern and impatient logicians, who saw pressing and systematic innovations to be realized almost everywhere in English society and institutions. It was moreover unable to dispense with the support of O'Connell, who, in his turn, could

not do otherwise than pander to the passions of his countrymen, who had been oppressed for so many centuries, and who were too rude, too ignorant, too irritated, and too wretched to understand and submit to the necessary delays of reparation. Assailed by these unbounded and endless requirements, compromised by these alliances which were offensive to English pride and alarming to English good sense, the Whig Cabinet hesitated, advanced, paused, conceded, retracted; but neither could its alternate concessions succeed in satisfying its various allies, nor did the high estimation in which its two leaders, Lord Grey and Lord Althorp, were held in the two Houses of Parliament, avail to arrest the progress of its decline.

When the general position is so difficult, personal embarrassments never fail to arise. Differences of opinion, inequalities of pace, incompatibilities of temper, soon carried disagreement into the Cabinet. Lord Grey's son-in-law, Lord Durham, a man of elegant mind and generous heart, but a spoiled child of aristocratic fortune, domestic flattery, and popular favour, was the first to set an example of disgust; he retired from the Cabinet, on account of his health, it was said, but more probably because, in his opinion, his colleagues went neither fast enough nor far enough in their advocacy of liberal views. A few months afterwards, and for more serious reasons, four ministers of greater importance, Lord Stanley, Sir James Graham, the Duke of Richmond, and the Earl of Ripon, also withdrew; like Sir Robert Peel, they would not consent to divert from their primitive and purely reli-

gious destination, the surplus revenues of the Church of Ireland, in order to apply them to public education. Two months later, another Irish question, the Coercion Bill for repressing agrarian outrages, led to a far more important resignation; the head of the Reform Cabinet, Earl Grey, a high-minded and susceptible man, of a more elevated than clear-sighted mind, unskilled in defending himself from the petty intrigues which he was incapable of originating, and prone, moreover, to lassitude and ennui, believed his honour wounded and his position falsified by the conduct of some of his colleagues, and the internal dissensions of his Cabinet; and he retired from office. Instead of retiring, according to custom, with their leader, the other ministers remained, and chose a new leader, Lord Melbourne. Thus, patched up with greater ingenuity than distinction, the Whig Cabinet continued to drag on a languishing existence until the month of November 1834, when the death of Earl Spencer summoned to the House of Lords his eldest son, Lord Althorp, who had been leader of the House of Commons, and whom it was very difficult to replace in that capacity. Lord Melbourne proceeded to Brighton, to submit to the King the new arrangements which this occurrence rendered necessary. William IV. did not approve of them, but complained of some of his advisers, and expressed his intention to transfer the reins of Government to other hands. Always cool and graceful in whatever position he might be placed, Lord Melbourne himself undertook to convey to the Duke of Wellington the letter in which the King empowered

him to form a new Cabinet; and on the following day, the 15th of November, to the great surprise of the public, the *Times* announced the news in these terms: 'The Whig Ministers are out; the Queen has done it all.'

It is a mania of frivolous politicians to attribute their reverses to hidden and unexpected causes. Queen Adelaide was an ardent Tory; but neither her influence, nor the more uncertain bias of the King in the same direction, would have brought about the downfal of the Whig Cabinet, if its evident decadence had not prepared the way for its catastrophe. Summoned to Brighton to take its place, the old leader of the Tories, the Duke of Wellington, gave a great example at once of modesty and power. 'It is not to me,' he told the King, 'but to Sir Robert Peel that your Majesty must apply to form a Cabinet; and to him it belongs to direct it. The difficulty and the predominance are in the House of Commons; the leader of that House must be at the head of the Government. I will serve under him, in any post which your Majesty may please to intrust to me.' The King made no objection; but Peel was absent from England; a month previously, he had set out with his family for Italy. Until his return, Lord Wellington offered to take upon himself the responsibility of the entire Government; and in concert with Lord Lyndhurst, for a period of three weeks, he did all that he had offered, conducting several ministerial departments himself, and calmly bearing the attacks of rigid constitutionalists, whilst the public smilingly

admired his confident boldness and indefatigable readiness to serve the King and the State. Letters recalling him to England, reached Sir Robert Peel at Rome, and on the 9th of December, 1834, he arrived in London, and unhesitatingly accepted his difficult commission. Earnestly desiring to free his Cabinet, from the outset, from every tinge of exclusion or reaction, he made every effort to secure the services of Lord Stanley and Sir James Graham, who had lately been members of the Whig ministry, and who both had supported Parliamentary reform. But they refused to take office. Compelled to attempt to govern, under the new constitution of Parliament, with the forces of that party alone which had opposed the Reform Bill, Peel immediately stated, in a letter to his constituents at Tamworth, what he thought of his position, and the course he intended to pursue: 'I will not accept power,' he wrote, 'on the condition of declaring myself an apostate from the principles on which I have heretofore acted. At the same time, I never will admit that I have been, either before or after the Reform Bill, the defender of abuses, or the enemy of judicious reforms. I appeal with confidence, in denial of the charge, to the active part I took in the great question of the currency—in the consolidation and amendment of the criminal law—in the revisal of the whole system of trial by jury—and to the opinions I have professed, and uniformly acted on, with regard to other branches of the jurisprudence of the country. . . . . With respect to the Reform Bill itself, I will repeat now the declaration

which I made when I entered the House of Commons as a member of the reformed Parliament, that I consider the Reform Bill a final and irrevocable settlement of a great constitutional question—a settlement which no friend to the peace and welfare of this country would attempt to disturb, either by direct or by insidious means. Then, as to the spirit of the Reform Bill, and the willingness to adopt and enforce it as a rule of Government: if, by adopting the spirit of the Reform Bill, it be meant that we are to live in a perpetual vortex of agitation; that public men can only support themselves in public estimation by adopting every popular impression of the day—by promising the instant redress of anything which anybody may call an abuse—by abandoning altogether that great aid of Government, more powerful than either law or reason, the respect for ancient rights, and the deference to prescriptive authority;—if this be the spirit of the Reform Bill, I will not undertake to adopt it. But if the spirit of the Reform Bill implies merely a careful review of institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, undertaken in a friendly temper, combining, with the firm maintenance of established rights, the correction of proved abuses and the redress of real grievances—in that case I can, for myself and colleagues, undertake to act in such a spirit and with such intentions.'

He set to work at once; the House of Commons was dissolved. The new elections gave the Conservative party a hundred more votes than they had numbered in the preceding Parliament. The two

parties tried their strength in the choice of a Speaker; Mr. Manners Sutton, the candidate of the new Cabinet, was beaten by a majority of ten. Far from regarding this defeat as insurmountable, Sir Robert Peel, in the debate on the address, showed himself full of ardour, and firmly resolved to pursue the conflict. 'I feel it to be my duty,' he said, 'my first and paramount duty to maintain the post which has been confided to me, and to stand by the trust which I did not seek, but which I could not decline. I call upon you not to condemn before you have heard—to receive, at least, the measures I shall propose—to amend them if they are defective—to extend them if they fall short of your expectations—but at least to give the opportunity of presenting them, that you yourselves may consider and dispose of them. I make great offers, which should not be lightly rejected. I offer you the prospect of continued peace—the restored confidence of powerful States, that are willing to seize the opportunity of reducing great armies, and thus diminishing the chances of hostile collision. I offer you reduced estimates, improvements in civil jurisprudence, reform of ecclesiastical law, the settlement of the tithe question in Ireland, the commutation of tithe in England, the removal of any real abuse in the Church, the redress of those grievances of which the Dissenters have any just ground to complain. . . . I offer also the best chance that these things can be effected in willing concert with the other authorities of the State; thus restoring harmony, insuring the maintenance, but not excluding

the reform (where reform is really requisite), of ancient institutions. You may reject my offers, you may refuse to entertain them, you may prefer to do the same things by more violent means; but if you do, the time is not far distant when you will find that the popular feeling on which you relied has deserted you, and that you will have no alternative but either again to invoke our aid, to replace the Government in the hands from which you would now forcibly withdraw it; or to resort to that pressure from without, to those measures of compulsion and violence which, at the same time that they render your reforms useless and inoperative, will seal the fate of the British Constitution.'

Events were in accordance with his words; several of the measures which Sir Robert Peel had enumerated were immediately brought forward; but the Whigs, angry with the Crown, and sure of their majority in the House, were determined to stop him at the very outset. As allies, they had the inveterate animosities of Ireland; the intractable passions of the Orangemen; O'Connell, who regarded Peel as his most personal enemy; the ultra-Tories, who compromised him by giving him their support; and the Radicals, who were too much opposed to the general spirit of his policy to be satisfied with his concessions. Amid the propositions of the Cabinet, Lord John Russell hastened to interpose the question upon which Sir Robert Peel could and would admit of no compromise—the question of the appropriation to public education of the surplus revenues of the established

Church of Ireland. In vain did Peel endeavour to postpone the debate on this subject, and to obtain the priority for the reform measures which he had proposed. After eight days of ardent discussion, three successive divisions evidenced the superior strength of the Opposition, and placed the Government in a hopeless minority. On the following day, the 8th of April, Peel thus spoke: 'I wish to notify to the House, that I, and all my colleagues of His Majesty's Government, in conjunction, and in conformity with our unanimous opinion, have felt it incumbent upon us, on combined considerations of the vote which the House of Commons came to last night, and of the position in which, as a ministry, we find ourselves here, to signify to His Majesty, that, in our judgment, it was our duty to place the offices we hold at his disposal. I do not hesitate to say that we have taken that course with the utmost reluctance . . . . and when I do not hesitate to avow that reluctance, I believe I shall have credit with the great majority of the House, that it is connected only with public principle. I have a strong impression that when a public man, at a crisis of great importance, takes upon himself the trust of administering the affairs of the Government of this country, he does incur an obligation to persevere in the administration of those affairs as long as it is possible. I do feel that no indifference to public life—that no disgust at the labour it imposes—that no personal gratification—that no discordance of private feeling, would sanction a public man, on light grounds, in withdrawing from

the post in which the favour of his sovereign has placed him. But, at the same time, there is an evil in exhibiting to the country a want, on the part of the Government, of that support in the House of Commons which will enable it satisfactorily to conduct the business of the nation, and to exercise a legitimate and necessary control over the proceedings of this House—a control conferred by the possession of the confidence of the House. I say, that there is an evil in that exhibition of weakness, to which limits must be placed; and reviewing all that has occurred since the commencement of the session, ... in my opinion, the time has arrived in which it is incumbent upon us to withdraw from the responsibility which office imposes. . . . . .

'I wished to give this explanation as briefly as I could, and in the manner least calculated to produce any angry feelings. The whole of my political life has been spent in the House of Commons; the remainder of it will be spent here; and whatever may be the conflict of parties, I for one shall always be anxious to stand well with the House, whether I be in a majority or in a minority. I do not hesitate to declare that, under no circumstances, under the pressure of no difficulties, would I ever have advised the Crown to resign that great source of moral strength which consists in a strict adherence to the practice, to the principles, to the letter, and to the spirit, of the constitution of this country. It is because I believe, in conformity with that constitution, a government ought not to persist in carrying on public

affairs, after a fair trial, against the decided opinion of a majority of the House of Commons—it is because I have that conviction deeply rooted in my mind, that I have relinquished my post, although I do sincerely regret the necessity which has compelled me to abandon the King's service at the present moment.'

The whole House listened to this speech with a silence expressive of emotion and esteem. Lord John Russell felt it his duty to declare that the retiring minister had acted with the most honourable fidelity to the spirit of the constitution; and after a conflict of four months, in which the vanquished had grown far greater than his conquerors, the Whig Cabinet, under the premiership of Lord Melbourne, and without the co-operation of either Lord Grey, Lord Spencer, or Lord Brougham, resumed the government of England.

It remained in office for six years, and during those six years, Sir Robert Peel also retained the attitude which he had adopted after the reform of Parliament, —decided in his views of all questions, active in all debates, unsparing in his criticisms of the Whig Cabinet, defending the permanent principles of English society and the English monarchy against the ministers and their allies, whether Irish or Radicals— but seeking neither to trammel nor to overthrow the Government, and far more anxious to extend, enlighten and discipline the new Conservative party, than eager to resume possession of power. More impatient than himself, his friends sometimes complained of this endless and resultless forbearance, and

Sir Robert Peel thought it his duty to give a public explanation of his conduct. A natural opportunity ere long presented itself. Shortly after the accession of Queen Victoria, in May, 1838, the Conservative members of the House of Commons, three hundred and thirteen in number, anxious to give their leader a solemn proof of their adherence, and the public a striking manifestation of their strength, invited Sir Robert Peel to a great political dinner in Merchant Tailors' Hall. A second object of this banquet was to cement the alliance which had at length been declared between Lord Stanley and Sir James Graham, and Sir Robert Peel and his party. At this meeting, Peel clearly set forth his policy and motives, and more particularly his motives for the reserve, apparently so unproductive, which characterised his otherwise decided opposition. 'There is impatience in some quarters,' he said, 'that, seeing the strength we possess, it is not called into more frequent action. . . . . But we must bear in mind that the particular course which an opposition should take, must partly depend upon the principles they maintain. Our more impatient friends in the country must recollect that our very name almost implies a contradiction; we are a Conservative Opposition; we adopt the principles which used to be said to prevail in an administration; we not only adopt the principles of a Government, but we perform many of its functions; and it must be borne in mind that we cannot, in conformity with our opinions, take that latitude of action which might befit an Opposition acting on precisely contrary

principles. An Opposition which professes to think the ancient institutions of this country a grievance, which considers English society a mass of abuses, has a double ground of opposition against a Government: it has first the ground of personal dissatisfaction with the course taken by the Government, censuring and disapproving of the acts of Government, together with no indisposition to inflame popular discontent against the institutions of the country. But we must bear in mind that our duty, prescribed to us by our principles is, to maintain the ancient institutions of the land. We have no desire to exalt the authority of the House of Commons above the prerogative of the Crown; we have no design to undermine the privileges of the House of Lords; on the contrary, it is our duty to defend them. The field of opposition occupied by those who seek to reduce and cripple our establishments is denied to us, because we wish to see the naval and military establishments of the country maintained in proper vigour and efficiency. It is not for us to inflame popular discontent by the exaggeration of public abuses. Nor can we lend the Crown our arm, to shake or curtail the liberties of the people. . . . . I ask those of our friends who are impatient for more decisive action, to remember the steps by which our power has been daily advancing. I call upon them to remember that it has been by moderation, by prudence, by an undeviating adherence to our principles, that we have attained our present position. . . . . I do hope we shall never be betrayed, for the sake of any temporary advantage, into a union with

those from whose principles we wholly disagree. I also hope that we shall never abandon our duty in the House of Commons, for the purpose of creating embarrassment, by leaving the Government to fight it out by themselves. My firm belief is that, by steadily performing our legislative functions, by attending to our duty, by censuring ministers, or attempting to censure them, when censure may be required, on all occasions by enforcing our principles, by amending their measures when they require amendment, though at the same time we should rescue them from temporary embarrassment, yet we shall thereby be establishing new claims on the public approbation.'

There was in this language as much of practical good sense as of moral sense. When united with perseverance, political moderation and probity do a party as much service as they do it honour. The Conservative party followed the counsels of Sir Robert Peel, and its continued progress proved more and more indisputably that both leader and soldiers deserved the power which they knew how to wait for, and which they sought so honestly to obtain.

For the second time, his impatient followers believed themselves at the goal of their wishes. During the session of 1839, the decline of the Whig Cabinet became visible and rapid. In reference to the corn laws, to the condition of Ireland, to the troubles excited in Jamaica by the abolition of slavery, the successes obtained by the ministry were so near being defeats, that on the 7th of May, either in discouragement, or for the purpose of putting the Opposition

to the test, they resigned. The Queen sent for the Duke of Wellington, who, as he had done in 1835, advised Her Majesty to address herself to Sir Robert Peel. Sir Robert expressed his readiness to form a Cabinet, and at once mentioned the principal persons of whom it would be composed. The Queen approved of them all, and announced her determination honestly to support her new advisers; but with equal frankness, she confessed that she regretted the old ones, and believed she had every reason to be satisfied with their services. The Whigs had surrounded her cradle: ever since her accession to the throne, Lord Melbourne, by the amenity of his character, by the impartial freedom of his judgment, by the charms of his mind, quietly humorous and gay, and by attentions at once respectful and almost paternal, had inspired her with a confidence and a liking bordering on affection. Peel and his friends felt some uneasiness on this account, and considered that, on assuming the reins of government, it was necessary for them to prove that they also possessed the entire confidence of the Queen. Peel requested that the principal offices in the royal household might be placed at his disposal. It was not, as it would appear, with Sir Robert, but with the Duke of Wellington himself, that the idea of making this request first originated. The young Queen was shocked at it; it was, the Whigs told her, an exorbitant pretension, utterly unauthorized by precedent. It was added that the great ladies of the Conservative party had spoken of it as of a triumph over the Queen, and had said that

when they composed her Court, they would be better able to restrain her within constitutional limits than the Whigs had been. Impertinence is sometimes a useful weapon, but more frequently it is a dangerous pleasure. On the day after Sir Robert Peel had made his demand, he received from the Queen the following note :—

'The Queen, having considered the proposal made to her yesterday by Sir Robert Peel to remove the ladies of her bedchamber, cannot consent to adopt a course which she conceives to be contrary to usage, and which is repugnant to her feelings.'

Sir Robert replied in a long and respectful letter, sensible and constitutionally true, but rather heavy and as devoid of elegance as of complaisance. He was evidently better suited to a Parliament than to a Court. The negotiation was broken off, and furnished a subject for debate in both Houses. The Conservatives, Wellington and Peel, maintained their ground; the Whigs vindicated the Queen's refusal, and declared themselves ready to accept the responsibility of it. They at once returned to office, and Sir Robert Peel, on his side, resumed, for two years more, his position as the ruling spirit of the Opposition.

In this position I found him in 1840, when King Louis Philippe did me the honour to send me as his ambassador to London. I saw him somewhat frequently during my mission, and we conversed freely on all subjects; on France, England, and Europe, on the relations of States among themselves as well as on the internal condition of societies. In reference to

foreign policy, and particularly with regard to the Turco-Egyptian question, which at that time occupied our attention, he appeared to me to be more inquisitive than decided, to be animated by a great spirit of justice and peace, but to have but vague and undetermined notions on affairs of this nature, like a man who has not made them the habitual subject of his reflections and resolutions. I more than once remarked the influence, partly sympathetic and partly fearful, which was exercised over his mind by our great revolution of 1789, and by the ideas and social forces which it has called into play. On this subject he shared neither the maxims nor the passions of the Tories of the old school; and in his inmost soul, in spite of all his moral, political, and national reservations, this great English Conservative was himself rather a child than an enemy of that new social order, which continues powerful and fruitful in spite of its faults, its reverses, its miscalculations, and its dark features. But what struck me most of all, in the conversation of Sir Robert Peel, was his constant and earnest solicitude with regard to the condition of the labouring classes in England—a solicitude arising as much from moral as from political considerations, and in which, beneath the cold and compassed language in which he expressed himself, might be discerned the emotion of the man as well as the forethought of the statesman. 'There is,' he often said, 'too much suffering and too much perplexity in the condition of the working classes; it is a disgrace as well as a danger to our civilisation; it is absolutely necessary to render their condition less hard and less

precarious. We cannot do everything, far from it; but we can do something, and it is our duty to do all that we can.' In the activity of his thought and the leisure of his life, this was evidently, as far as he was concerned, the dominant idea of the future.

This future drew near. Ever since its two restorations in 1835 and 1839, the Whig Cabinet had been wearing itself out by continuing in office without growing in power. During the sessions of 1840 and 1841, it began again to totter, and it was easy to foresee that it would soon fall once more. The attacks of the Opposition became more pressing. Peel no longer restrained the ardour of his friends. The Whigs began to perceive that his blows were more hardly dealt, and might soon prove mortal. They endeavoured to intimidate or weaken him, by foretelling the difficulties which would beset him in the exercise of power. 'I believe,' said Mr. Macaulay, 'that if, with the best and purest intentions, the right honourable baronet were to undertake the government of this country, he would find that it was very easy to lose the confidence of the party which raised him to power, but very difficult indeed to gain that which the present Government happily possesses—the confidence of the people of Ireland.' It was by help of Ireland most of all that the Whigs hoped to maintain themselves in power, and to paralyse their formidable opponent. They called on him to explain himself with clearness on this question, and generally to state the views and principles of conduct which would guide him if he were placed at the head of the Government. Peel unhesi-

tatingly accepted the challenge. 'Two demands,' he said, 'have been made by the opposite side, in the course of this discussion. The one, that he who is about to give his vote of want of confidence in the Government should specify the grounds upon which that vote is given; the other, that those who from their position may be regarded as the probable successors of the Government which it is sought to displace, should state upon what principles of public policy they propose to conduct the affairs of this country. The absolute justice of the first of these demands I willingly admit. The other demand, namely, that I should explain in detail my views of public policy, is perhaps not equally imperative in point of strict obligation, but it is a demand to which, from considerations of prudence, I shall most willingly accede. There shall be no limit to the fulness and unreservedness of the answers which I will give, excepting your impatience. I know too well the little value that can be placed on that support which arises from misconception of one's real opinions. I have had too much experience of solemn engagements, entered into for the purpose of overturning a Government, violated when that object had been obtained. I have so little desire to procure a hollow confidence, either on false pretences or by a delusive silence, that I rejoice in the opportunity of frankly declaring my opinions and intentions on every point on which you challenge unreserved explanation.'

He began by setting forth the motives of his opposition, addressing himself in turn to his more eminent antagonists, to Lord Howick, to Mr. Macaulay, to Lord John Russell, with more cutting irony than he

was wont to use; then, returning to himself, he passed in review all the great public questions of the time, all his own opinions regarding reform, the privileges of Parliament, the Poor Law, the Corn Law, Catholic Emancipation, the Administration of Ireland—maintaining what he had said on former occasions, pointing out what he would think it his duty to do if the Government were in his hands; speaking explicitly and positively on the most delicate topics, on legislation with respect to corn, among other things, perhaps beyond the bounds of necessity, and certainly beyond the dictates of prudence, but evidently carried away by the natural authority of his character, and by the consciousness of his great position. 'I have done,' he said, after having spoken for more than two hours. 'I have fulfilled the purpose for which I rose, by specifying the grounds on which I withhold my confidence from the present Government, and by declaring the course I mean to pursue on the great question of public policy on which the public mind is divided. I cannot answer the question you put to me, "What principles will prevail, if a new Government be formed?" but I can answer for it, that if the principles I profess do not prevail, of that Government I shall form no part. It may be, that by the avowal of my opinions I shall forfeit the confidence of some who, under mistaken impressions, may have been hitherto disposed to follow me. I shall deeply regret the withdrawal of that confidence; but I would infinitely prefer to incur the penalty of its withdrawal than to retain it under false pretences. It may be, that the principles I profess cannot be reduced to practice, and that a Government attempting the

execution of them would not meet with adequate support from the House of Commons. Still I shall not abandon them. I shall not seek to compensate the threatened loss of confidence on this side of the House by the faintest effort to conciliate the support of the other. I shall steadily persevere in the course which I have uniformly pursued since the passing of the Reform Bill, content with the substantial power which I shall yet exercise—indifferent as to office, so far as personal feelings or personal objects are concerned—ready, if required, to undertake it, whatever be its difficulties—refusing to accept it on conditions inconsistent with personal honour—disdaining to hold it by the tenure by which it is at present held.'

The vote of want of confidence in the Whig Cabinet was negatived on that day by a majority of twenty-one: but the blow had been struck. During the following session, on the 27th of May, 1841, a similar vote, proposed by Sir R. Peel himself, was carried by 312 votes against 311. The Cabinet, determined to leave no chance untried, persuaded the Queen to dissolve Parliament. The elections sealed their fate. The new House of Commons, which met on the 19th of August, 1841, in the debate on the Address, gave the Conservatives a majority of ninety-one votes over the Whigs. On the 30th of August, the Whig Ministers resigned their offices into the hands of the Queen; and thirty-two years after his first entrance into the House of Commons, Sir Robert Peel, fulfilling the expectations of his father and of the companions of his youth, stood at the head of the Government of his country.

CHAPTER VII.

Character of the New Cabinet.—And of the New Premier.—Speech from the Throne.

He acceded to power under the most brilliant, yet precarious auspices, with a splendid array of strength, but also with hidden sources of weakness. His triumph was as legitimate as it was complete; the Whig Cabinet had succumbed to no accident, to no manœuvre; it had slowly worn itself out, in the open daylight of solemn debates, and had retired before the positive and well-considered vote of Parliament. The Cabinet which Sir Robert Peel had formed numbered among its members men most illustrious by their renown, by their rank, by their capacity, by the esteem in which they were held: in the House of Peers, the Duke of Wellington, who had no special office; Lord Lyndhurst, as well skilled in political discussion as in the administration of justice; Lord Aberdeen, a man of conciliating and elevated mind,

prudent, patient, and equitable, and better acquainted than any other person with the interests and diplomatic traditions of Europe; Lord Ellenborough, the most brilliant of the Tory orators. In the House of Commons, Lord Stanley, whom the noble leader of the Whigs, Lord Grey, told me in 1840, that he regarded as the most direct descendant of the great oratorical school of Pitt and Fox; Sir James Graham, an eminent administrator, a fertile and animated reasoner, full of resources in debate; around them a group of men still young, yet already highly distinguished—laborious, enlightened, sincere, and devoted,—Mr. Gladstone, Lord Lincoln, Mr. Sidney Herbert, Sir William Follett; behind this political staff, a numerous majority, trained by ten years of conflict, contented and proud of their recent triumph; and at the head of this powerful party and this great Cabinet, Sir Robert Peel, an undisputed leader, tried and accepted by all, surrounded by public esteem, invested with all the authority of character, talent, experience, and victory. Never perhaps had a First Minister united at his accession so many elements and guarantees of a safe and strong government.

But he was called on to perform the most difficult of tasks—a task essentially incoherent and contradictory. He was obliged to be at once a Conservative and a Reformer, and to carry along with him, in this double course, a majority incoherent in itself, and swayed, in reality, by immovable and untractable interests, prejudices, and passions. Unity was wanting to his policy, and union to his army. His position

and his mission were equally complex and full of embarrassment; on him, a commoner, devolved the duty of subjecting a powerful and haughty aristocracy to stern reforms; he, a sensible and moderate, but truly liberal Liberal, had to draw after him the Tories of the old school and the ultra-Protestants. And this commoner, who had now become so great, was a man of a reserved and unsympathetic character, of cold and awkward manners, able to direct and sway an assembly, but ill adapted to influence men by the charms of intimacy, of conversation, of open-hearted and frank communication,—more a tactician than a propagandist, more powerful in argument than over the feelings, more formidable to his adversaries than attractive to his partizans.

With the sagacity of party spirit, his adversaries estimated, more accurately than perhaps he did himself, the difficulties which awaited him; and they were by no means disposed to smoothen his path. They were still Ministers when Parliament met, and when called upon to prepare, as their last will and testament, the Royal Speech, the Whigs took good care clearly to define the double task which they had been unable to accomplish themselves, but which they imposed on their successor. In the Speech from the throne they stated it thus:—'The extraordinary expenses which the events in Canada, China, and the Mediterranean have occasioned, and the necessity of maintaining a force adequate to the protection of our extensive possessions, have made it necessary to consider the means of increasing the public revenue. Her

Majesty is anxious that this object should be effected in the manner least burdensome to her people; and it has appeared to her Majesty, after full deliberation, that you may, at this juncture, properly direct your attention to the revision of duties affecting the productions of foreign countries. It will be for you to consider whether some of those duties are not so trifling in amount, as to be unproductive to the revenue, while they are vexatious to commerce. You may further examine whether the principle of protection upon which others of those duties are founded, be not carried to an extent injurious alike to the income of the State and the interests of the people. Her Majesty is desirous also that you should consider the laws which regulate the trade in corn. It will be for you to determine whether these laws do not aggravate the natural fluctuations of supply; whether they do not embarrass trade, derange the currency, and by their operation, diminish the comfort and increase the privations of the great body of the community.'

Thus retiring with every possible advantage, the Whigs charged Sir Robert Peel to repair their faults and to perform their promises. He was condemned to restore the character of the Government and to reform the laws, to supply the deficiency in the revenue, and to lighten the burdens of the people.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Charges brought by the Whigs repelled by Sir Robert Peel.—Birth of the Prince of Wales.—Establishment of the Income Tax.—Speech of Sir Robert Peel.—Revision of the Import Duties on Foreign Products.—Sir Robert Peel's testimony to Mr. Huskisson.—The Sliding Scale.—Schism in the Cabinet.—Retirement of the Duke of Buckingham.—Speech of Lord Palmerston and Sir Robert Peel's Reply.—Progress of Events towards Free Trade.

BEFORE setting out on his progress towards this double object, he spent five months in studying the facts of the case, and in preparing his measures. Impatient to resume the always easy task of opposition, the Whigs complained of his dilatoriness: Peel replied to them with poignant irony: 'If I am responsible for not proposing a measure on the Corn Laws within one month of my accession to office, what must be thought of that Government—that has held office for five years, and yet never, until the month of May, 1841, intimated, on the part of that Government, a united opinion on that subject? What! if you are so convinced of the intolerable evils inflicted upon this country by the operation of the Corn Laws—if you think that commercial distress is to be attributed justly to them—if you think that they are at the root of the

privation and suffering to which the labouring classes in some districts of the country are exposed—what has been your neglect of duty in permitting five years to elapse without bringing forward, on the part of a united Government, a proposition for the remedy of these abuses? Why have you allowed this question to be an open question in the administration? . . . . I should have thought that, after returning to power after a lapse of ten years, there would have been a universal impression that it was but reasonable that I should not be called upon within a month to propose an alteration in this law. I should have thought that it would have been felt that there might be advantage in the access to official information—that it might be desirable to avail ourselves of the information that exists. . . . I do wish that the noble Lord had taken the sense of this House of Commons—elected under his advice, and under his auspices—with respect to the reasonableness and justice of the demand which I make upon its confidence; and had thus enabled me to judge whether the House of Commons approves or disapproves of the course which I mean to pursue.' The Whigs had no notion of submitting such a question to the House; they knew too well what its answer would be. Parliament was prorogued before Sir Robert had stated his plans. It met again, on the 3rd of February, 1842, with unusual excitement and splendour. The Queen had recently given birth to the Prince of Wales; a strong monarchical feeling animated both the country and the Legislature; both Houses voted addresses of affectionate congratulation

to Prince Albert, as well as to the Queen herself. The King of Prussia, the first of the Protestant sovereigns of the Continent, the ancient and natural ally of England, had come to London to act as sponsor to the young prince. He was present at the opening of the session. Although fortuitous and fleeting, happy events, ebullitions of public joy, are serviceable to the Government which is in power at the period of their occurrence. After debates of a merely formal character, addresses in reply to the speech from the throne were voted, in both Houses, without any dissentient voice. They announced that measures would be at once proposed for the restoration of equilibrium between the income and expenditure of the State, for the revision of the customs' duties, and of the corn laws, for the amendment of the bankrupt law, for the registration of voters, for regulating the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts, and for affording to the distress of certain manufacturing districts all the relief that legislation could supply. All hesitation and all slowness now disappeared from the course of the Cabinet; it set both Houses to work at once, and for more than six months, from the 3rd of February to the 12th of August, 1842, Sir Robert Peel was constantly in the breach, either explaining and discussing his plans with regard to the great questions of the day, or meeting all the attacks of the Opposition, and grappling with all the incidents of Government.

The means which he adopted for restoring equilibrium in the finances of the State—the establishment of a tax on all incomes above 150*l.* a-year,—met with

strong opposition, and among economists and financiers, especially in France, has not ceased to afford a subject for criticisms as lively as the apprehensions which suggest them. At a period so much inclined as our own to democratic passions—or, I should rather say, so timid before democratic pretensions and attacks—a tax which falls only on the wealthier classes, and therefore occasions no popular excitement, is too tempting not to give ground for fear that it may be abused. The imposition of the tax upon incomes, is moreover evidently subject to an uncertainty, to an inquisitorialness, to an arbitrariness, and to frauds, which render it particularly disagreeable and open to suspicion. These objections apply less strongly to England than to any other country. In England, in every career in which human activity is exercised, there is a far larger number of great fortunes which it is easy to ascertain and to reach. The guarantees of legality, liberty, publicity, and I will even say of morality, in the relations of citizens with the State, are more certain and effectual in that country than elsewhere. Moreover, an income-tax was not a new thing to the people; in 1798, Mr. Pitt had proposèd and carried one at the rate of ten per cent.; Sir Robert Peel only asked for three per cent. He adhered unswervingly to his demand; in his eyes, it was a question of national honour as well as of administrative prudence. 'I have now performed my duty on the part of Her Majesty's Government,' he said, at the close of his speech. 'I have proposed, with the full weight and authority of the Government,

that which I believe to be conducive to the public welfare. I now devolve upon you the duty, which properly belongs to you, of maturely considering and finally deciding on the adoption or rejection of the measures I propose. We live in an important era of human affairs. There may be a natural tendency to overrate the magnitude of the crisis in which we live, or those particular events with which we are ourselves conversant; but I think it impossible to deny that the period in which our lot and the lot of our fathers has been cast—the period which has elapsed since the outbreak of the first French Revolution—has been one of the most memorable periods that the history of the world will afford. The course which England has pursued during that period, will attract for ages to come the contemplation, and, I trust, the admiration of posterity. That period may be divided into two parts, of almost equal duration; a period of twenty-five years of continued conflict, the most momentous which ever engaged the energies of a nation—and twenty-five years, in which most of us have lived, of profound European peace, produced by the sacrifices made during the years of war. There will be a time when those countless millions that are sprung from our loins, occupying many parts of the globe, living under institutions derived from ours, speaking the same language in which we convey our thoughts and feelings, for such will be the ultimate results of our wide-spread colonization;—the time will come when those countless millions will view with pride and admiration the example of constancy and fortitude which our

fathers set during the momentous period of war. . . . In the review of the period, the conduct of our fathers during the years of war will be brought into close contrast with the conduct of those of us who have lived only during the years of peace. I am now addressing you after the duration of peace for twenty-five years. I am now exhibiting to you the financial difficulties and embarrassments in which you are placed; and my confident hope and belief is, that, following the example of those who preceded you, you will look these difficulties in the face, and not refuse to make similar sacrifices to those which your fathers made for the purpose of upholding the public credit. You will bear in mind that this is no casual and occasional difficulty. You will bear in mind that there are indications amongst all the upper classes of society of increased comfort and enjoyment—of increased prosperity and wealth; and that concurrently with these indications there exists a mighty evil which has been growing up for the last seven years, and which you are now called upon to meet. If you have, as I believe you have, the fortitude and constancy of which you have been set the example, you will not consent with folded arms to view the annual growth of this mighty evil. You will not adopt the miserable expedient of adding, during peace, and in the midst of these indications of wealth and of increasing prosperity, to the burdens which posterity will be called upon to bear. . . . . Your conduct will be contrasted with the conduct of your fathers, under difficulties infinitely less pressing than yours. Your conduct will

be contrasted with that of your fathers, who, with a mutiny at the Nore, a rebellion in Ireland, and disaster abroad, yet submitted with buoyant vigour and universal applause (with the funds as low as 52), to a property-tax of 10 per cent. I believe that you will not subject yourselves to an injurious or an unworthy contrast. . . . . My confident hope and belief is, that now, when I devolve the responsibility upon you, you will prove yourselves worthy of your mission—worthy to be the representatives of a mighty people. You will not tarnish the fame which it is your duty to cherish as the most glorious inheritance. You will not impair the character for fortitude, for good faith, which, in proportion as the empire of opinion supersedes and predominates over the empire of physical force, constitutes for every people, but above all for the people of England, the main instrument by which to repel hostile aggressions and maintain extended empire.'

The House thought and felt with the minister who did it honour by trusting to its virtue; the great party who marched under his leadership—landowners, capitalists, merchants, manufacturers, aristocrats, and wealthy men of all classes—accepted the burden which he imposed upon them, and order was re-established in the finances of the State.

At the outset and in appearance, the second of the measures proposed by Sir Robert Peel was of less serious import; it consisted in the revision of the import duties on foreign products. 'Speaking generally,' he said, in introducing the measure to the

House, 'we have sought to remove all absolute prohibitions upon the import of foreign articles, and we have endeavoured to reduce duties, which are so high as to be prohibitory, to such a scale as may admit of fair competition with domestic produce. In cases where that principle has been departed from, and prohibitory duties maintained, we justify our departure from the rule by the special circumstances of the case. With respect to raw materials, which constitute the elements of our manufactures, our object, speaking generally, has been to reduce the duties on them to almost a nominal amount. In half-manufactured articles, which enter almost as much as the raw material into our domestic manufacture, we have reduced the duty to a moderate amount. And with regard to completely-manufactured articles, our design has been to remove prohibition, and to reduce prohibitory duties, so that the manufactures of foreign countries may enter into a fair competition with our own.' Twelve hundred articles were comprised in this new tariff; the duties were reduced on seven hundred and fifty articles, and these reductions added to the reduced duties on coffee and timber for building, would, it was calculated, entail a loss of £1,040,000 on the exchequer. 'Many gentlemen who are strong advocates for free trade,' said Peel, 'may consider that I have not gone far enough. I believe that on the general principle of free trade, there is now no great difference of opinion, and that all agree in the general rule that we should purchase in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest; . . . . but it is

impossible, in dealing with such immense and extensive interests, to proceed always by a strict application of the general principle. I believe that the true friends to general principle will argue, that it is not expedient or proper to propose such a change as would produce so much individual injury as to cause general complaint and excite a strong sympathy. I contemplate the matter in the same point of view as this question was contemplated by a distinguished statesman, now no more, with whom it was my good fortune to act in 1825. That eminent man then proposed to make some changes in the commercial and colonial policy of the country, but the proposition which he brought forward was not so extensive as that which I have had the honour of submitting to the House. Mr. Huskisson, when he brought it forward, prefaced his speech with these observations:—"I am not anxious to give effect to new principles where circumstances do not call for their application; feeling as I do, from no small experience in public business—and every day confirms that feeling—how much, in the vast and complex interests of the country, all general theories, however incontrovertible in the abstract, require to be weighed with a calm circumspection, to be directed by a temperate discretion, and to be adapted to all the existing relations of society with a careful hand, and a due regard to the establishments and institutions which have grown up under those relations."—These, I think, are just and profound and wise opinions, and in the temper in which Mr. Huskisson acted, I and my colleagues have

attempted to remodel and simplify the tariff. . . . We have proceeded with such care and caution as to produce as small an amount of individual suffering as was compatible with the end in view. I regret any suffering that may be inflicted on any parties, but if we admitted the principle of putting off the question on that account, I fear that we should have to postpone the consideration of all such questions to an indefinite period. I sincerely hope that the general result of this and the other measures will be ample compensation for any individual suffering that may be inflicted; and that they will increase the demand for the employment of industry, and thus increase the means of the people to command the comforts and necessaries of life. We have made this proposal at a time of very considerable financial embarrassment; but in doing so we have set an example to Europe, we have declared that we will not seek to improve our finances by increasing the duties on imports;—we have trusted to other means for replenishing our exchequer. . . . I firmly believe that the example which England is now setting will ultimately prevail. But if we find that our example is not followed by foreign nations, still this ought not, in my opinion, to operate as a discouragement to us. It is for the interest of this country to buy cheap, whether other countries will buy cheap from us or no. Not only, therefore, will our principles be immediately profitable to us, but the example we set must ultimately insure that general application of them, which will confer reciprocal

benefit both on ourselves and on all those who are wise enough to follow it.'

Whilst Peel was speaking, at the moment when he expressed his assent to the general principle of free-trade, he was loudly cheered by the Opposition. He paused a moment, and then said:—'I know the meaning of that cheer. I do not now wish to raise a discussion on the Corn Laws or the Sugar Duties. I have stated the grounds, on more than one occasion, why I consider these to be exceptions to the general rule, and I will not go into the question now. I know that I may be met with the complaints of gentlemen opposite, of the limited extent to which I have applied the general principle to which I have adverted, to these important articles. I have felt satisfied that it was inexpedient to apply such important changes, as I have heard suggested, to these important interests. After the best consideration that I could give to the subject, I thought that if I proposed a greater change in the corn laws than that which I have submitted to the House, I should only aggravate the distresses of the country, and increase the prevailing alarm. Under these circumstances, I think that we have made as great a change as was just or prudent.'

He had in fact, at the beginning of the session, approached this difficult matter, and proposed the only reforms, in respect to the legislation on corn, which it was then his intention to introduce. These reforms were, in truth, inconsiderable; he maintained the system of the sliding-scale of duties on the importa-

tion of foreign corn, but modified it in a liberal sense, by changes in the method of fixing the averages of prices, and by lowering the protection afforded, on the different degrees of the scale, to home-grown wheat. The maximum protective duty, which had been 27*s.* per quarter when home-grown wheat was under 60*s.* per quarter, was reduced to 20*s.*, and was only to take effect when wheat was under 51*s.* These modifications satisfied none of the opposing parties: the Whigs, with Lord John Russell for their spokesman, proposed the substitution of a fixed duty of 8*s.* per quarter for the sliding-scale; Mr. Villiers, Mr. Cobden, and the Radicals demanded the complete abolition of all duties on corn. Mr. Christopher, in the name of the ardent partizans of protection, proposed that a higher rate of duties should be adopted at every degree of the sliding-scale. Sir Robert Peel obtained the rejection, after protracted debates, of all these propositions, and firmly maintained the Government plan without any vehement confidence, without illusion, without charlatanism, offering his scheme as the most equitable compromise between the conflicting interests involved in the question, but promising no one either the final reconcilement of those interests, or the cessation of the distress of the working classes in certain parts of the country. 'I feel it my duty,' he said, at the opening of his speech, 'to declare that, after having given to this subject the fullest consideration in my power, I cannot recommend the proposal which I have to make, by exciting a hope that it will tend materially and immediately to the mitigation of

commercial distress. While I admit the existence of that distress, while I deplore the sufferings which it has occasioned, and sympathize with those who have unfortunately been exposed to privations, yet I feel bound to declare that I cannot attribute the distress, to the extent in which it was by some supposed imputable, to the operation of the Corn Laws. . . . . I see a combination of causes, acting concurrently and simultaneously, sufficient in my opinion, to account, in a great degree, for the depression which has prevailed among the manufacturing and commercial interests of the country.' He was equally sincere in the discussion and estimation of the practical value of his measures; evidently perplexed, though fully decided, and greatly harassed by the conflict in his mind between his earnest desire to ameliorate the condition of the working classes, and the duty of acting considerately towards the landed interest and the national agriculture, not merely from motives of parliamentary prudence, but from motives of justice and permanent necessity. 'It is impossible,' he said, 'not to feel that those who advocate the repeal of every impost of every kind upon the subsistence of the people, are enabled to appeal to topics which give them a great advantage—to urge that there is a tax upon bread, and that that tax is maintained for the protection or advantage of a separate class. . . . . Nevertheless, I retain my opinion, which I expressed some time ago, that it is of the utmost importance to the interests of this country that you should be as far as possible independent of foreign supply. By this I

do not mean absolute independence, for that, perhaps, is impossible; and nothing, I think, would be more injurious than to pass such laws as would give rise to a general impression that it was intended to keep this country in absolute independence of foreign supply; but, speaking generally, I say that it is of importance, in a country like this, where the chief subsistence of the labourer consists of wheat, if we resort to foreign countries for supplies, to take care that those supplies should be for the purpose of making up deficiencies rather than as the chief sources of subsistence. . . . . The duty which I propose will doubtless cause a very considerable decrease of the protection at present afforded to the home-grower; but if he will fairly compare the nominal amount of duty which exists at present with that which I propose, he must perceive that he will still be adequately protected, and that the decrease can be made consistently with justice to all the interests concerned . . . . . The protection which I propose to retain, I do not retain for the especial protection of any particular class. Protection cannot be vindicated on that principle. The only protection which can be vindicated, is that protection which is consistent with the general welfare of all classes in the country. I should not consider myself a friend to the agriculturist, if I asked for a protection with a view of propping up rents, or for the purpose of defending his interest or the interest of any particular class, and in the proposition I now submit to the House I totally disclaim any such intention. My belief, and the belief of my colleagues is, that it is

important to this country—that it is of the highest importance to the welfare of all classes in this country —that you should take care that the main sources of your supply of corn should be derived from domestic agriculture; while we also feel that any additional price which you may pay in effecting that object is an additional price which cannot be vindicated as a bonus or premium to agriculture, but only on the ground of its being advantageous to the country at large . . . . This is the proposal I am authorized, on the part of her Majesty's Government, to submit to the House. . . . . And in my opinion, this is not altogether an unfortunate period for the adjustment of the question. In the first place, there is no such amount of foreign corn available to the supply of this country as need excite the alarm of those who dread an excess; and in the next place, there has been, during the period which has elapsed since the separation of Parliament, concurrently with great commercial distress, as much of moderation, of calm, and of disposition to view with moderation and calmness a proposal for the adjustment of this question, as could possibly have been anticipated. There may have been excitement,—there may have been attempts to inflame the minds of the people,—but this I must say, that the general demeanour and conduct of the great body of the people of this country, and of that portion of them who have been most exposed to sufferings on account of commercial distress, have been such as to entitle them to the utmost sympathy and respect. There is no difficulty, then, in the shape of violence, interposed

to the settlement of this question; and it appears to me to be perfectly open for legislation at this moment. I earnestly trust that the result of the proposal which I now submit to the House, whether it be acceded to or not, will, at all events, be to lead to some satisfac-factory adjustment of the question.'

This was hoping too much from the general wisdom of men, and from his own particular wisdom: though adopted without amendment and by large majorities, Sir Robert Peel's propositions, far from leading to a satisfactory and final settlement of this great question, were but another step in the conflict. No sooner had he manifested his intention to reduce the protective duties of the sliding scale, than a schism began in his party and extended even to his Cabinet; the Duke of Buckingham, to whom he had given office, as being the most devoted representative of the agricultural interest, resigned; and in the House of Commons, a hundred and four Conservatives voted for the amendment in favour of enacting higher protective duties than those proposed by the ministerial plan. Mr. Villiers and Mr. Cobden obtained ninety votes in favour of the complete abolition of the Corn Laws. The system of a fixed duty suggested by the Whigs was supported by 226 votes against 319, given in favour of the sliding scale. However complete the victory of the Government, these were not, particularly at the outset of their career, oppositions and symptoms of the future to be treated with contempt. At the close of the session of 1842, two days before the prorogation of Parliament, Lord Palmerston, undertook

to bring this state of things clearly to light, and to set in motion all its embarrassments and dangers, beneath the feet of the victorious Cabinet. 'Surely,' he said, 'the day on which we gave up the seals of office, and when power was transferred to our opponents,—surely that day was a day of exultation and triumph to the Tory party. Surely that was a day which secured for years to come the maintenance of that system of monopoly and restriction to which they are attached, and which they conceive to be no less conducive to the public interest than to their own. But alas, the vanity of human wisdom!—alas, how short-sighted are the most sagacious of men! But a few short months passed over their heads before their songs of triumph were changed into cries of lamentation. The very persons whom they had chosen to be their appointed champions, the very guardians whom they armed for their defence, turned their weapons upon them, and with inhuman and unrelenting cruelty struck blows, which though not at present fatal, must ere long lead to the total extinction of their favourite system. Great is now their disappointment, and bitter their complaints! We have not heard much of these complaints in this House; there are reasons for that: but every other house in London, all the clubs, and every street of the town, have been ringing with the invectives of men, who represent themselves as the victims of the grossest deception. I say it is true they have been grossly deceived—but by whom? Not by the right honourable baronet opposite, but by themselves. They have themselves, and themselves only, to blame

for any disappointment they have suffered in consequence of the course pursued by her Majesty's Government. Why did they not, during the ten long years they were following their present leaders in opposition, take due pains to ascertain what the opinions of those leaders were, upon matters which they deem of vital importance? . . . What those opinions are, we in this House have, during the present session, had full opportunities of learning. We have heard them stated fully, explicitly and unequivocally; and I am bound to say that more liberal doctrines, more enlightened views, sounder or juster principles could not have been propounded by any advocate of Free Trade on this side of the House. But no man can suppose that the gentlemen opposite inherited these principles from us with their offices; or that they found them locked up in the red boxes which we left on our tables. . . . Still less can it be supposed that these recently-propounded doctrines and opinions are the result of deep studies, to which the Tory leaders have devoted themselves, since their accession to office in September last. We know by experience what are the labours of official men. We know that the stream of business comes flowing in with unceasing volume every hour of the day, like the current of the Thames; and the man who ventures to delay will soon be irretrievably overwhelmed. . . It is not to be supposed, therefore, that during the five months which elapsed between the 3rd of September, when the present Government came in, and the 3rd of February, when Parliament assembled, her Majesty's ministers

could have found leisure to study the works of Adam Smith, of Ricardo, of M'Culloch, of Mill, and of Senior. No, Sir, it is manifest that the opinions which they have so well expounded in the present session of Parliament must have been the fruits of long previous meditation and study—of study deliberately pursued during the ten years of comparative leisure, which a state even of the most active opposition will afford; and they must have come into office fully imbued with those sound principles, the enunciation of which has excited so much admiration on this side of the House, and has created so much surprise and alarm on the other. . . The measures, indeed, which they have proposed have fallen far short of the necessities of the country—far short of the wishes of this side of the House—far short of the principles on which they were founded and recommended. But a great step has been made in the right direction, when we have got a Tory Government speaking out as the present Government has done. This should inspire us with hope for the future, and make us endeavour to be content at present with what we have already gained.'

Peel keenly felt a blow so ably struck, and in returning it, he treated his opponents haughtily and roughly, and his friends in a mild and conciliatory spirit. Speaking immediately after Lord Palmerston, 'the noble Lord,' he said, 'ought to view with toleration the changes of opinion of others. For the long period of twenty years he was the zealous partizan of Perceval, of Castlereagh, of Canning: up to the year 1827, up to the death of Mr. Canning, the determined

and unvarying enemy of Parliamentary Reform—of reform to every extent, and in every shape—the noble Lord was the faithful follower of Mr. Canning. In 1830 he became the equally faithful follower of Earl Grey—the determined, unvarying advocate of Reform. Did the noble Lord, during the life-time of Mr. Canning, see nothing in the circumstances of the times—in the progress of events—which indicated the approaching necessity of great constitutional changes? Did he see nothing to convince him that it was prudent to anticipate popular demands, and by timely and moderate concessions to avert the necessity for dangerous innovations? . . . . . If some sudden unforeseen contingency, not within the scope of human foresight, such as the Revolution of 1830 in France—justified and demanded this change of opinion on the part of the noble Lord, I may feel, as I do feel, convinced of the purity of his motives; but I feel also that harsh and intolerant criticisms on the versatile opinions of others, proceed with a very bad grace from the noble Lord . . . . . He would insinuate that I have deluded my supporters by the extent and importance of the alterations which I have made in the Corn Laws. From one section of his friends I have uniformly heard a very different charge: namely, that the alteration in the Corn Laws is not important, and not extensive; that there has been certainly deception and delusion, but deception and delusion practised, not on the agricultural interest, but on the great body of consumers. These charges cannot both be true; and, in fact, both are without foundation.

I have deceived no one. I have adopted no principles of government which I did not profess in Opposition. When in Opposition, was I not constantly told that the support given to me was a reluctant and hollow support; that my supporters disapproved of my moderation, of my leanings towards commercial freedom? When I took office in 1835, did I not make a public declaration of the principles on which I should act? and in what particular have I departed from them in 1842? . . . . The noble Lord says that we did not find our good principles, or the measures founded upon them, in the red boxes of the late Ministers. No one can contest that truth: never was an observation more just. There was not, I willingly admit, one trace left by the late Government of their intentions with regard to the tariff. They may have been excellent, but we discovered no evidence of them. . . . . It was not until your days were numbered, and when you were in the hour of dissolution, that like sorry penitents you remembered the principles you had forgotten or neglected in the time of your strength; and you threw discredit upon the principles themselves, by trying to make them subservient, not to the promotion of the public weal, but to the rescue of a tottering administration . . . . . The noble Lord has a defence for the inaction of the Government in the later years of its existence, which he thinks quite triumphant. They were not strong enough, it seems, to enforce their principles. They were controlled, overpowered by their opponents. Then why did they retain office? Why did they prefer the retention of

office to the maintenance of their principles? Why did they not propose that which they believed to be right, and cast on Parliament the responsibility of rejecting it? I have a right to ask that question. Did I abandon the malt-tax in 1835 because I was threatened with opposition from my supporters? No: I called them together; I told them the continuance of the malt-tax was essential to the maintenance of the public credit; that I would resist the repeal of it, and retire from office if I was beaten. I did resist the repeal effectually. . . . . You told me last year that I must be an instrument in the hands of others, and that the power was denied to me of enforcing my own principles. I declared then, as I declare now, that I consider office—its power, its distinction, its privileges,—as nothing worth, except as the instrument of effecting public good. If it is to be held by sufferance, if it can be retained only on the condition of abandoning my own opinions, and obeying the dictates of others, it will not be held by me. My reward for all the sacrifices it entails, is the prospect of that honourable fame which can only be attained by steadily pursuing the course which, according to the best conclusions of our fallible judgment, we honestly believe to be conducive to the welfare of the country. . . . . It is not by subserviency to the will of others; it is not by the hope of conciliating the temporary favour of majorities that such fame can be acquired; and in spite of all the noble Lord has said, in spite of the rumours he has heard of concealed dissatisfaction among our supporters, we have the

proud satisfaction of knowing that we retain their confidence, while we claim for ourselves the privilege of acting on our own opinions. From the commencement of the session to its close, we have received that generous support which has enabled us to overcome every difficulty, to carry triumphantly every measure we have proposed. There may have been shades of difference, there may have been occasional dissatisfaction and complaint; but I have the firm belief that our conduct in office has not abated one jot of that confidence on the part of our friends, which cheered and encouraged us in the blank regions of Opposition; and next to the approval of our own consciences, and to the hope of future fame, the highest reward we can receive for public labours is their cordial support and their personal esteem.'

It was not merely from motives of prudence, and with a view to strengthen the shaken courage of his party, that Sir Robert Peel held this language: his confidence was sincere, and to a certain extent well-founded. As he had reminded the House, he had more than once, in the presence of his assembled adherents, proclaimed his principles and asserted his independence; in spite of evident differences of opinion and manifestations of ill-temper, the bulk of the party had remained, and still continued, faithful to him. Necessary to one another, agreeing on the fundamental principles of government, invariably defeated whenever they were disunited, the leader and the majority of his partizans kept together without asking importunate questions, doing nothing mutually to deceive,

but avoiding the necessity of undeceiving one another, and covering their disagreements and miscalculations by concessions or by silence. A rare example of intelligence and patient moderation in an incurably-false position; a position which could not continue without growing worse as it became more clear, but which, thanks to the exercise of these political virtues, could and did last for a long while yet! In Parliament, light was beginning to be thrown on this danger; in the country two important facts, the Anti-Corn Law League and the condition of Ireland, hastened the progress of events, and constrained Sir Robert Peel to proceed more rapidly in the course on which he had entered.

CHAPTER IX.

Severe distress at Bolton.—Dr. Bowring.—Speech of Paulton, a young surgeon at Bolton, against the Corn Laws.—Petition of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce.—Richard Cobden.—Suggestion of the Anti-Corn-Law League.—The Chartists.—Their opposition to the League.—Its steady progress.—Stirring speech of Mr. W. J. Fox.—The 'Times' gives its support to the League.—Difficult position of Sir Robert Peel.—Mr. Drummond, mistaken for Sir Robert Peel, is shot by MacNaughten.—Resistance of Sir Robert Peel to the Repeal of the Corn Laws.—Personal attack upon him by Mr. Cobden.—Emotion of Sir Robert Peel.—Disclaimer of Mr. Cobden.

In Lancashire, not far from Manchester, Bolton, a manufacturing town of the second class, with a population of 50,000 inhabitants, had been plunged in the most cruel distress by the commercial crisis. Out of fifty manufacturing establishments, thirty were closed; more than five thousand workmen knew not where to find, and scarcely even where to look for, the means of subsistence. Disorder and crime, the companions of misery, were increasing in this ill-fated town with frightful rapidity. Nearly one-fourth of the whole number of houses were uninhabited; the prisons were full to overflowing. Children were dying of hunger in their mothers' arms; fathers were deserting their wives and families, striving to forget them, as they were unable to feed them. Parliament instituted inquiries into the extent and causes of this distress.

Bolton was then represented in the House of Commons by Dr. Bowring, an intelligent, active, enthusiastic and indefatigable political economist, who unceasingly brought the deplorable condition of his constituency under the notice of the House, urging it as an argument in favour of free trade, of which he was one of the most zealous advocates, and sustained in his philanthropic ardour by his taste for the pleasure of making a noise in the world by doing good. The evil continued; no remedy was brought to bear on it. An old physician, Dr. Birney, one day gave notice that he would deliver a lecture in the theatre at Bolton, on the corn law and its effects. A large crowd assembled to hear him; the house was filled; but when the speaker rose to address his audience, he became so confused and embarrassed that it was impossible for him to proceed. The disappointment and ill-humour which this occasioned in an assemblage already sufficiently out of spirits, soon turned into active irritation. A formidable riot was about to ensue, when a young surgeon, named Paulton, sprang upon the stage, and suddenly improvised an eloquent invective against the corn laws, and the sufferings which they inflicted on the working classes. The meeting listened to him and applauded him with enthusiasm. He was requested to repeat his lecture on another evening. He did so, and adduced in support of his views an additional array of facts, arguments, and motives for indignation. Dr. Bowring happened at that moment to be in Manchester, where a committee had just been formed among the princi-

pal manufacturers, for the purpose of investigating the public distress, and the means of remedying it. Hearing of Mr. Paulton's lectures, he invited him to come to Manchester, and to lay his views before the committee. Mr. Paulton met with as much approbation and concurrence at Manchester as at Bolton, and was sent by the committee on a tour through the principal manufacturing districts of England, for the purpose of inspiring them with equal zeal for the same object. Soon after, the Manchester Chamber of Commerce almost unanimously adopted a petition to Parliament for the total and immediate abolition of the corn laws. The manufacturers, merchants, traders, and workmen of the town, to the number of twenty-five thousand and upwards, signed a sort of declaration of war against those laws; and in order to render the movement effectual, by providing for its continued action, the manufacturers formed a permanent association for the prosecution of their object; established, under the name of the *Anti-Bread-Tax Circular*, a periodical publication, to be the organ of their opinions and proposals; engaged an efficient staff of lecturers to disseminate their views; and opened a subscription to pay the expenses of the work, which immediately rose to fifty thousand pounds.

Thus began the regular organization of the public feeling against the corn laws, and in favour of an interest and an idea.

An idea is nothing without a man. A man was soon found to head the rising institution. Richard Cobden, a calico-printer, who had been established in

Manchester for some few years, had quickly distinguished himself among his fellow-townsmen by his penetrating, straightforward, and fertile intellect, by his lively, natural, clear, and bold eloquence, as well as by his honourable character and industrial success. He was wealthy and popular, and although local jealousies had excluded him from the representation of Manchester in the House of Commons, he had been elected for the neighbouring borough of Stockport. No sooner had he joined the Free-trade Association than Cobden perceived that, if Manchester remained the centre of the movement, and the Manchester manufacturers its chief supporters, it would produce but little effect. That combination of instinct and prompt reflection which characterizes powerful minds and true vocations, taught him that, in order to succeed, the association must become general instead of particular, national instead of provincial, and must have as its centre of publicity and action, London—the great centre of the country and its government. This would, moreover, secure to himself the sure means of playing the first part in this mighty work. At Manchester, he had rivals who were more wealthy and influential than himself; in London, and as a Member of Parliament, he naturally became the mouthpiece and the head of the association. He accordingly did his utmost to transfer the seat of the society to London—to the midst of the great political movement, and of the already celebrated advocates of commercial liberty. Communications were established between them and the Manchester Committee; meet-

ings were held, at which the objects and principles of the association, its conditions and means of success, were discussed and proclaimed in a higher and more extensive sphere than that in which it had originated. At one of these meetings, Mr. Cobden had been describing the Hanseatic League, and other similar confederations formed in the middle ages for the purpose of resisting aristocratic oppression, and protecting the industrious classes. 'Why should not we have a league?' exclaimed one of his audience. 'Yes,' answered Cobden; 'an Anti-Corn-Law League.' The suggestion was immediately and unanimously adopted; it spread rapidly, wherever the Manchester movement had penetrated; and the association which waged war against the taxes on corn, had thenceforward a striking name, a popular leader, unity and grandeur of purpose.

At its very beginning, the League had to encounter a serious danger; just before its formation, another association had been organized with far different aims—I mean the association of the Chartists, who aspired to nothing less than to change, no matter at what cost, the civil as well as the political state of England, her society as well as her constitution: revolutionaries, as foolish as they were arrogant, who, among other capital faults, committed that of copying the language of foreign revolutions. It was the object of the Chartists to get the lead in all popular assemblies, and to secure pre-audience for their principles and projects. They had recently, at a great meeting held in Leeds, come to a violent rupture with the

Radicals, who refused to insist absolutely and uncompromisingly on universal suffrage; they now repudiated the Anti-Corn-Law League with equal violence, because it was determined to confine its efforts to the attainment of its own modest purpose; they refused to enter into any alliance with it for so limited an object, introduced tumult and confusion into its meetings, and ended by plunging its chief supporters, the manufacturers, into the most cruel perplexity, by advising the workpeople to desert their factories and cease from all labour, as it was certain, they said, that when all the sources of production and revenue were thus dried up, the Government would be forced to capitulate, and to submit to any conditions that the working classes might please to dictate. Such counsel naturally found ready credit in the manufacturing districts, desolated by the prevailing distress. All labour ceased; the idle workmen paraded, in noisy masses, through the streets and environs of the towns, here and there committing serious outrages on the spot, but not generally menacing in their demeanour. From calculation as well as from instinct, the Anti-Corn-Law League kept aloof from this movement, which at the same time compromised the actual interests of its leaders and the distant object which they aspired to achieve. Attempts were made to throw upon them at least the indirect responsibility of this state of things, and in all probability, pretexts for this charge were not wanting, for in great public agitations, all innovators are jointly liable for consequences, and lend the breath of their passions, at the

outset, to fan disorders which most of them view with reprehension. In reality, Mr. Cobden and his friends deplored a perturbation which popular sufferings and Chartist follies had alone excited, and when, after the lapse of a few weeks, it ceased in consequence of repressive measures and its own exhaustion, they were assuredly among the first and most sincere to rejoice at its subsidence.

Restored to liberty of action by the re-establishment of public order, they resumed their public meetings: they had begun in the theatre at Bolton; they now hired the theatres of Drury-lane and Covent-garden in London. The houses were arranged for the purpose; a small platform was erected for the speakers; a numerous crowd of every rank, station, and sex, filled the pit, boxes, and gallery; and at stated periods, the most distinguished political economists came there to attack the system of protection, and to demand commercial freedom in the name of principles and of interests, of science and of charity. We should find it difficult to conceive, and in France we should not tolerate, the degree of violence to which the speakers sometimes allowed themselves to be carried. In the state of our society and manners, the halting-places are too few, and the means of Conservative resistance too weak, for such attacks on the established order of things and the existing laws to be made among us without danger. We have forgotten this too much in our efforts for liberty; we desire the torrent, and detest all dykes; which leads to this deplorable result, that when the inundation bursts forth and ravages the

land, we can apply no other remedy than drying up the springs themselves, at the risk of languishing and perishing afterwards of drought and thirst. Even the Christian pulpit would not allow itself at the present day, within the precincts of our churches, and in the name of charity to the poor, to draw such pictures as the apostles of free trade presented to the view of the English public in Covent-garden Theatre. 'It is something,' said Mr. W. J. Fox, who was soon after elected to a seat in the House of Commons, 'it is much to many here, that, through every station, in every rank of life, the pressure is felt; the demon seems to be omnipresent, and they cannot escape his pestiferous influence. But even this is not the deadliest influence of the Corn Laws. Did one want to exhibit it in this great theatre, it might be done; not by calling together such an audience as I now see here, but by going out into the by-places, the alleys, the dark courts, the garrets and cellars, of the metropolis, and by bringing thence their wretched and famished inmates. One might crowd them here—boxes, pit, and galleries—with their shrunk and shrivelled forms, with their wan and pallid cheeks, with their distressful looks—perhaps with dark and bitter passions pictured in their countenances—and thus exhibit a scene that would appal the stoutest heart, and melt the hardest—a scene that we would wish to bring the prime minister upon the stage to see—and we would say to him, "There, delegate of majesty! leader of legislators! conservator of institutions! look upon that mass of misery! That is what

your laws and power, if they do not create, have failed to prevent, have failed to cure or mitigate." And supposing this to be done, could this scene be realised, we know what would be said; we should be told, "There has always been poverty in the world; there are numerous ills that laws can neither make nor cure; whatever is done, much distress must exist." They will say, "It is the mysterious dispensation of Providence, and there we must leave it." I would say to the premier, if he used such arguments, "Hypocrite! hypocrite! urge not that plea yet, you have no right to it. Strike off every fetter upon industry; take the last grain of the poison of monopoly out of the cup of poverty; give labour its full rights; throw open the markets of the world to an industrious people; and then, if, after all, there be poverty, you have earned your right to qualify for the unenviable dignity of a blasphemer of Providence."'

When an idea has thus become transformed into a passion and a virtue, when the element of truth which it contains thus completely effaces and obliterates the objections which it excites, and the other truths which limit it, deliberation ceases, discussion is at an end; action only is thought of, its partisans march, dash onwards. The League made the most rapid progress: in most counties and towns in Scotland and England, meetings were held, declarations of principles were published, abundant subscriptions were collected. A seat became vacant in the representation of the City of London in the House of Commons. Mr. James Pat-

tison, who stood on free-trade principles, was elected in opposition to Mr. Thomas Baring, the Conservative candidate. The most eminent of London bankers, Mr. Samuel Jones Loyd, gave in his adherence to the League. The "Times" newspaper, which hitherto had spoken slightingly of the movement, changed its tone, and solemnly declared, 'The League is a great fact.' The fund of 50,000*l.*, the produce of the first subscription, was exhausted; it was determined to raise a new fund of 100,000*l.*, and at the first meeting held at Manchester, the sum of 13,700*l.* was immediately subscribed. Finally, a new and unexpected accession of partisans brought the League a great increase of influence: in various agricultural districts, and more particularly in the county of Dorset, meetings of farm-labourers, the favourites of protection, were held, at which they recounted their own distress, which was almost equal to that of the manufacturing classes. 'I be protected,' cried a peasant at one of these meetings, 'and I be starving!'

Peel watched this great movement with kindly but anxious eyes; a friend of the principles advocated by the League, he was offended by the violence of its language, and the impatience of its demands; and his thoughts ran more on the immediate difficulties which he foresaw it would produce, than on the strength which he might one day perhaps derive from it. The public distress, which still continued, filled him with sorrow; he persisted in thinking, as he had stated on his assumption of power, that the corn law was neither its sole, nor even its principal cause. Neither

the new law which he had carried on this subject, nor his measures for the reduction of the tariff, had as yet brought about any great and evident results. The public revenue was in a depressed state; the encroachment which had been already made on the protective system, and the still more serious peril with which it was menaced by the League, redoubled the anger of the exclusive Tories; their attacks upon Peel for 'the treason he had already consummated, and his obscure designs,' daily became more violent. He was irritated rather than intimidated by them; but in the midst of this turmoil of parties, in presence of all these hostile or compromising passions, in view of so many facts and problems, as yet uncertain and unsolved, he deemed it wiser rather to slacken than to hasten his progress in the difficult path on which he had entered.

A painful event occurred to add a feeling of personal sadness to this disposition of his mind. As he was one day walking with his private secretary, Mr. Drummond, an unknown Scotchman, named Daniel MacNaughten, who had recently arrived in London from Glasgow, met him, and asked some bystanders if that was not Sir Robert Peel. A few days afterwards, on the 21st of January, 1843, Mr. Drummond, while walking near Charing-cross, was shot by MacNaughten, who had mistaken him for Sir Robert Peel. At the trial it was clearly proved that no political opinion or passion had prompted the commission of this crime, and that the assassin had acted merely on the insane idea that he was the victim of a

fancied persecution, of which he believed Sir Robert Peel to be the author. He was sent to a madhouse; but the impression made on Sir Robert by this unfortunate occurrence was deep, and erelong manifested itself.

On the 2nd of February, 1843, on the very day of the opening of the session, and in the debate on the Address, he hastened to make an unequivocal declaration of the expectant policy which he intended to pursue in reference to the great question which agitated the country. 'I made in the course of last year,' he said, 'with the aid of my friends and colleagues in office, more extensive changes in the commerce of the country, and the code which regulates it, than were made at any former period. If I had contemplated any further immediate extensive changes, I would at once have proposed them in the course of last session. Why should I not have done so? I stated the general principles on which I proceeded, and to those general principles I adhere. Whatever changes I propose will be in conformity, when I do propose them, with those general principles; but I did not lead honourable gentlemen to expect that I would go on, year after year, introducing extensive changes . . . . I cannot forget that, in this country, protection has been the rule; that under it great and extensive interests have grown up, and that if, in stating better principles, and substituting a better system for one that is defective, you proceed too hastily—if you produce distress in consequence of your beneficent efforts to introduce contentment and

happiness, you run the risk of obstructing the free and rapid progress of those principles . . . . . I should be deceiving honourable gentlemen if I led them to expect in the present session any such extensive alterations as those which have been hinted at. I will not now enter into a vindication of the Corn Laws; an opportunity will probably be afforded by some gentleman who takes a different view of the subject from myself, for discussing their operation and effects. But when I am asked to come forward and declare whether I contemplate extensive changes in the Corn Laws, I feel it right to avow that her Majesty's Government have it not in contemplation to propose such extensive changes.'

After so positive a declaration, great agitation prevailed in the House; the partisans of Free Trade had not excited such a movement out-of-doors with such success, in order to obtain nothing but inaction in Parliament. Their attacks became pressing; Mr. Cobden made them personal. After having maintained that the agricultural population suffered as much from the Corn Laws as the manufacturing classes, and that the new law was as baneful as the old one, he thus directly addressed Sir Robert Peel: 'What is the remedy you propose? What are the proceedings by which you propose to give relief to the country? You have acted on your own judgment, and you are responsible for the consequences of your act . . . . . You passed your law, you refused to listen to the manufacturers, and I throw on you all the responsibility of your own measure . . . . The

Right Honourable Baronet says, it is his duty to judge independently, and act without reference to any pressure; and I must tell the Right Honourable Baronet that it is the duty of every honest and independent Member to hold him individually responsible for the present position of the country. . . . . I tell him that the whole responsibility of the lamentable and dangerous state of the country rests with him.' On hearing this charge of responsibility and personal responsibility, so often and so vehemently repeated, Sir Robert Peel rose with visible emotion. 'The honourable gentleman,' he said, 'has stated here, very emphatically, what he has more than once stated at the conferences of the Anti-Corn-Law League, that he holds me individually—individually responsible for the distress and suffering of the country; that he holds me personally responsible. But be the consequences of these insinuations what they may, never will I be influenced by menaces, either in this House or out of this House, to adopt a course which I consider . . . . . ' He was unable to complete his sentence: whether friends or opponents, many Members asked themselves what he meant, and why he was so much affected. It was perceived that the shade of Mr. Drummond haunted his mind, and that this responsibility for the public distress, charged upon him with so much vehemence, struck him as a provocation to his assassination. Mr. Cobden at once explained, protesting earnestly against so unjust a suspicion. Not only his friends, the Radicals, but the Whigs also, Lord John Russel among others, defended

him from the imputation as an indignity which he could never have conceived; and when the House rose, he again repeated his disclaimer with evident sincerity, and with deep regret that such a meaning could have been for one moment ascribed to his words. Sir Robert Peel accepted his explanation, but coldly, and still maintained an air of reserved distrust. Courageous even to obstinacy, he was, at the same time, of an extremely nervous susceptibility, and inclined to the bitterest suppositions—a bitterness which, in this instance, was excusable and almost providential. Passion is too ready to think the innocence of its intentions will prevent any evil effects ensuing from its transports; but who can tell how much fatal poison may be contained in words uttered without any evil design—poison that may excite to action the ardent and perverse spirits that are always obscurely fermenting in the unknown regions of society?

CHAPTER X.

Condition of Ireland.—The Maynooth Grant.—Debate on the Irish Fire-arms Bill.—Speeches of Lord Clements and Mr. Sheil.—Disappointment in Ireland.—O'Connell's attack upon the Whigs.—Peel's great Meeting at Tara.—Defiant speech of Mr. O'Connell.—His manifesto.—The meeting at Clontarf prohibited.

ANOTHER burden, far heavier to bear, and far less easy to get rid of than the Corn Laws, Ireland, constantly weighed on Sir Robert Peel. After the emancipation of the Catholics, he had flattered himself that this wound in the side of his country and government was well-nigh healed. Without openly proclaiming it, he had constantly present to his mind the plan conceived by Mr. Pitt, when, in the year 1800, he effected the union of the two kingdoms. The emancipation of the Catholics; the payment by the State of a fixed endowment to the Catholic clergy; the foundation of institutions of public instruction for the purpose of giving to that clergy, in the country itself, the education which they either did not receive at all, or which they went to the Continent to seek;—by the combination of these three measures, the union of Ireland

with England was to be rendered real and effectual. Sir Robert Peel had carried the first, and if no one as yet ventured to propose the second, the third had been a long time in operation. In 1795, Mr. Pitt had established at Maynooth, in the county of Kildare, a college for the special purpose of educating Catholic priests; and since that period, under all Governments, whether Whig or Tory, and in spite of the opposition of the ultra-Protestants, Parliament had annually voted, for the maintenance of this institution, a sum of money not indeed very large, but important on account of the principle which it represented. On the 20th of September, 1841, scarcely three weeks after the formation of the Conservative Cabinet, on the opposition to this annual grant being renewed, Sir Robert Peel had openly stated, 'I have voted for the grant to Maynooth College for the last thirty years, whether in or out of office, without feeling any violation of religious scruples; and I consider it my duty to make the proposal of the present grant.' The grant was carried by ninety-nine votes to twenty-three, and the persistent good-will of the Prime Minister towards the Catholic clergy of Ireland was made evident at the same time as the obstinate resistance he was destined to encounter.

Judging by appearances, his position, in reference to Irish questions, resembled that in which he stood with regard to economic questions in England; in both cases he was opposed by the two extreme parties—in the former, by the ultra-Protestants and the Catholic masses—in the latter, by the unyielding partisans of

the Protective system and the popular advocates of Free Trade, by Sir Robert Inglis and Mr. O'Connell, as well as by the Duke of Buckingham and Mr. Cobden; but in reality the difference between the two positions was immense, and the difficulty of the two tasks incomparable. In England, the question of the Corn Laws was not in itself incapable of solution, and was evidently destined to terminate either in a compromise, or in the adoption of a new principle, more or less disadvantageous to certain interests, but not fraught with any disturbance of the State. Sir Robert Peel, moreover, had to deal, in the camp of the Protectionists as well as that of the Free Traders, with intelligent adversaries, well-skilled in political conflict, who were not completely blinded by passion, even when their passion was violent, and who, in victory, were capable of moderation, and, in defeat, of resignation. In Ireland, he had to reconstitute the whole system of society, at the same time that he did away with its entire history; of victors and vanquished, masters and serfs, differing in race, religion, and language, after centuries of war and oppression, he had to form, and that quickly, a nation of free and equal citizens, governed like their neighbours in England and Scotland. And at each step in this superhuman task, Sir Robert Peel had to contend, on the one hand, with the interests and passions of his own party, and on the other, with the hatred, prejudices, and inveterate ignorance of a people; while at the same time, he was pursued by the personal hostility of a popular leader, who had long been the powerful advocate of a

good cause, but was now a charlatan in the service of an insensate desire. Whilst the Anglo-Irish Protestant aristocracy, both lay and ecclesiastic, strenuously fought in defence of their domination, O'Connell noisily demanded, in the name of the Irish people, that which Peel could not grant under any circumstances, or at any price—the destruction of the great work of Pitt, the repeal of the union between the two kingdoms.

During the sessions of 1843 and 1844, three great debates in both Houses, which lasted for several days, led both parties to give full expression, by the mouths of private members as well as of leaders, to all that they had on their minds in reference to the state and government of Ireland. The records of this great conflict remain to us: after studying them with care, I have remained convinced of the foolish blindness of the hopes of the Irish, and of the inconceivable levity of the English, whether Whigs or Tories, with regard to their promises. The first of these debates was on a bill proposed by Lord Eliot, the chief secretary for Ireland, for continuing certain laws, which had long been in existence, with respect to the possession of fire-arms in that country, where acts of violence and assassination were of too frequent occurrence. Lord Clements, the member for Leitrim, spoke against the bill: 'It is unconstitutional and diabolical,' he said. 'What would be the feelings of the noble lord, the Secretary for Ireland, and what his expressions, if I presumed to propose for England a measure such as that which he has dared to suggest should be established in Ireland? We are not satisfied—we are not

content—we are dissatisfied—we are very much dissatisfied in Ireland. We want English legislation in Ireland—we want to have that legislation in this House. If we are not to have it, then the sooner we know it in Ireland the better. . . What we ask, we ask boldly, plainly, distinctly. We ask you to govern in Ireland as you do in England—we ask for this—we ask for no more. Grant it, or otherwise we shall remain dissatisfied—we shall remain discontented, and in a state of agitation.' Two months later an eminent man, after O'Connell the most eloquent of the representatives of Ireland in the House of Commons, Mr. Sheil, spoke to the same effect, though with greater moderation, on the same subject. 'The people of Ireland,' he said, 'will be led to inquire, why it is the Legislature should be united, and our legislation should be distinct; and how it comes to pass that a bill should have been carried by large majorities, which for England, under circumstances of extreme hazard, no minister was sufficiently adventurous to propound.' In the following year, O'Connell himself gave utterance to the same idea in still more explicit and absolute language. 'The Union,' he said, 'ought to have been the amalgamation of the two countries—the identification of the two islands. There should have been no rights or privileges with one, that should not have been communicated to the other. The franchise should have been the same—all corporate rights the same—every civic privilege identical. Cork should have no more difference from Kent than York from Lancashire. That

ought to have been the Union. That was Mr. Pitt's object.' This was in fact the idea which the Irish people had conceived of it; the complete and immediate enjoyment of the rights, the laws, the liberties, the prosperity of England—such was, in their eyes, the necessary consequence of the union of the two kingdoms; they grew angry when they found they had to wait for it; they had been deceived if they did not possess it.

There is no greater fault in politics, and no greater offence in political morals, than to excite beyond measure the ever-ready hopes of a people, and to open out before their imagination, as their immediate conquest, prospects which they may never perhaps attain, and towards which, in any case, their progress must be slow. This was, beginning with Mr. Pitt, the fault, the error, the offence of all English Cabinets as regarded Ireland. I say the error, for there was a great deal of sincerity both in their intentions and in their conduct. The troubles of Ireland were becoming a serious danger to them; her miseries weighed upon them as a sort of remorse. Actuated by an ardent desire to terminate these difficulties and misfortunes, they shared in the illusions which they took delight in spreading. They deceived themselves just as they deceived the Irish, with regard to the value of their measures and the efficacy of their promises. Centuries of iniquity and tyranny cannot be done away with in a single day; a people cannot be regenerated by the passing of a few laws. The more England lavished hopes upon Ireland, the more irritated did

Ireland grow at her disappointment. Accused in turn of having deceived her, and in turn compelled to repress her violence, both Tories and Whigs were in turn the objects on which she poured forth her anger. O'Connell had lately called the Whigs 'base, bloody, and brutal;' he had attacked Lord Grey as well as Sir Robert Peel; and the meetings that he convoked to demand the repeal of the Union had commenced under Lord Melbourne's ministry.

Struck by his own powerlessness and the equal impotence of his predecessors, Peel expressed himself on the subject with profound sorrow. In reply to Mr. Sheil, he said: 'The right honourable gentleman says he is surprised at the apparent apathy and calm composure with which I view the present state of things in Ireland. I assure the right honourable gentleman I view that state of things with no other feelings than those of deep anxiety and pain. I know that I have done all I could. I had a hope that there was a gradual abatement of animosities on account of religious differences. I thought I saw, even in the intercourse of members of this House, a kindly and reciprocal feeling. I thought I saw the gradual influence of those laws which removed the political disabilities of the Roman Catholics, and established civil equality. I thought I saw, in some respects, a great moral and social improvement; that the commercial intercourse of Ireland with this country was increasing; that there was a hope of increasing tranquillity in Ireland, and of a diminution of crime; that the redundant and superfluous capital of this country, which was seeking

a vent in foreign speculations of the most precarious nature, would be applied to a sphere more legitimate and more productive—the increasing improvement of Ireland. The agitation has blasted all those hopes.'

The evil soon produced more serious consequences than blasted hopes. Agitation openly prepared the way for sedition. Such enormous masses of people flocked to the meetings held for the purpose of demanding the Repeal of the Union, that they were called Monster-meetings, and the Repeal leaders took pleasure in thus displaying their strength, in the hope that the Government would be intimidated. On the 15th of August, 1843, five hundred thousand men, it was said, assembled at Tara, formerly celebrated as the place where the ancient monarchs of Ireland were elected previously to the English invasion, and which had been more recently the scene of a defeat of the insurgents in the great Irish rebellion of 1798. O'Connell here spoke out more boldly and confidently than ever. 'Yes,' he said, 'the overwhelming majesty of your multitude will be taken to England, and will have its effect there. The Duke of Wellington began by threatening us. He talked of civil war, but he does not say a single word about that now. He is now getting eyelet-holes made in the old barracks. And only think of an old general doing such a thing—just as if we were going to break our heads against stone-walls! I am glad to find that a great quantity of brandy and biscuit has been lately imported, and I hope the poor soldiers will get some of them. But the Duke of Wellington is now talking of

attacking us, and I am glad of it. I mean no disrespect to the brave, the gallant, and the well-conducted soldiers that compose the Queen's army; there is not one of you that has a single complaint to make against any of them. They are the bravest army in the world, and therefore I do not mean to disparage them at all; but I feel it to be a fact that Ireland, roused as she is at the present moment, would, if they made war upon us, furnish women enough to beat the entire of the Queen's forces. . . . See how we have accumulated the people of Ireland for this Repeal year. When, on the 2nd of January, I ventured to call it the Repeal year, every person laughed at me. Are they laughing now? It is our turn to laugh at present. Before twelve months more, the Parliament will be in College Green. . . The Irish Parliament will then assemble, and I defy all the generals, old and young, and all the old women in pantaloons—nay, I defy all the chivalry of the earth—to take away that Parliament from us again.'

A short time after this meeting, and in reply to the speech with which the Queen had closed the Session of Parliament, O'Connell issued a manifesto, in which he declared, in his turn, that Ireland had nothing further to expect from the English Government, in the way of redress of her grievances, and that legal and constitutional means were exhausted; and a new meeting, which was to surpass, it was said, in number and enthusiasm, any that had yet been seen, was summoned for the 8th of October following, at Clontarf, near Dublin, where the Irish had in ancient times gained a victory over their Danish invaders

The whole programme of the day, the march, the arrival, the position, the organization of the people, were all solemnly arranged beforehand, with an air of military precision, as if there had been, not a popular assembly to be harangued, but an army to be passed in review on the eve of battle.

Both in Dublin and in London, the Government thought that the time had come when its patience should be fairly exhausted. In Dublin, the Viceroy, Lord de Grey, and the Chancellor, Sir Edward Sugden—both of them thorough Tories, and devoted to Anglo-Protestant principles and interests—declared that it was impossible to tolerate such demonstrations, even should they not as yet end in hostilities. The Chief Secretary for Ireland, Lord Eliot, a man of more liberal views and more favourably disposed to the Irish, was of the same opinion. In London, Sir Robert Peel had too high an idea of the mission and dignity of the ruling power, to allow it to be thus braved and menaced. 'We shall maintain the law,' was his constant saying, in reference to Ireland; and he gave his instant approval to the propositions of the Privy Council in Dublin. By a proclamation published on the 7th of October, the meeting which had been announced for the 8th, was prohibited; on the 14th, Mr. O'Connell, with his son John, and his principal associates, were arrested on charges of conspiracy, sedition, and unlawful assembling. They were admitted to bail, however, and it was decided that their trial should take place before the Court of Queen's Bench in Dublin, on the 16th of January, 1844.

In 1843, Sir Robert Peel had witnessed the outbreak of all the difficulties of his position; all the questions which occupied the attention of England, were accumulated over his head; he was engaged in conflict with all his adversaries. He had suffered some rebuffs; he had exhibited some uncertainty of policy; he had assumed, on some important occasions, a rather inert and obscure attitude. His enemies were satisfied and derisive. The newspapers attacked him insultingly. Among impartial spectators, many began to doubt his good fortune, and to speak of his approaching dangers. They were mistaken. Although the session of 1843 had not been either so brilliant or so successful to him as that of 1842, his internal policy, whether active or expectant, explicit or reserved, had remained precisely the same—at once moderate and independent as regarded both his friends and his opponents, enlightened and honest, prudent and patient without timidity, and based on a regard for the interests of the country (not for the caprices of the public), as befits a serious and conscientious ruling power in a free country. He had continued to prove himself what he really was, the most liberal of Conservatives, and the most conservative of Liberals, and the most capable man of all in both parties. He was firmly established in the confidence of the Queen, and had not ceased to grow in the confidence of the Parliament and the country. His foreign policy, equally worthy of esteem, and still more rare in its character, contributed no less materially to honour his name, and to insure his influence.

CHAPTER XI.

Foreign policy of England.—Views of Sir Robert Peel on foreign affairs.—The Earl of Aberdeen.—Complications abroad.—The policy of King Louis Philippe.—England and the Slave Trade.—The Author's embassy to London.—M. Thiers' refusal to sign the modified treaty respecting the Right of Search.—Ministry of M. Guizot.—The treaty signed.—Contest in the French Chambers.—Prince Metternich.—French hostility to England.—Suspicions of Sir Robert Peel.—Lord Aberdeen reproached as the tool of Louis Philippe.—Patience of Lord Aberdeen.—Letter from him to M. Guizot.—Visit of King Louis Philippe to London, accompanied by the Author.—Conversations with Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington.—Tahiti.—Zeal of the Protestant Societies.—The Jesuits.—The English Missionaries in Tahiti.—The French Protectorate in Tahiti.—Discussion in the House of Commons.—Excitement in England.—Sagacity of Lord Aberdeen.—Delicate position of the Author.—Speech in the Chamber of Deputies.—Difficulties in Tahiti.—Mr. Pritchard.—Fermentation against the French.—Arrest of Mr. Pritchard.—Speech of Sir Robert Peel.—Arrangement between England and France.—The Queen's Speech.—French Possessions in Africa.—The Mussulman States in Europe.

When I say 'his foreign policy,' my language is not perfectly accurate; properly speaking, Sir Robert Peel had no foreign policy that was really his own, of which he had a clear conception, which proposed to itself a special plan of European organization, and the adoption of which he assiduously applied himself to secure. It is the natural condition of free countries, that internal politics, questions of constitutional organization and public well-being, great measures of administration and finance, occupy the chief rank in their affairs. Unless the national independence is threatened, or a people is a mere instrument in the hands of a master, home affairs take precedence, in its

opinion, over foreign affairs. This is more especially the condition of England, defended by the ocean from external complications and dangers. 'Happy nation,' M. de Talleyrand used to say, 'that has no frontiers!' I do not remember that at any period in English history, the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs has been held by the Prime Minister; custom, with its deeplying reasons, has usually connected the premiership with the office of First Lord of the Treasury. Sir Robert Peel was essentially a First Lord of the Treasury—the leader of the Home Government in the State, and of the Cabinet in the Parliament.

But if foreign policy was neither his dominant idea, nor his principal occupation, he had two powerful and noble maxims, or rather feelings, on this subject; he desired that peace and justice should prevail among States. And these mighty words were not for him merely a profession, a means of acting on the minds of men; he desired that peace and justice should prevail in the relations of England with other nations, seriously and sincerely, as a good and habitual policy. Although very solicitous about the greatness of his country, and even very accessible to popular impressions with regard to the national dignity and honour, he formed no design of aggrandizement for England, felt no selfish jealousy of foreign nations, and had no mania for domination abroad, no fondness for displaying an undesired and arrogant influence. He respected the rights and dignity of other States, small as well as great, weak as well as strong—and regarded the employment of menace or force solely as a last extremity, legitimate only when it was abso-

lutely necessary. I repeat the same words, because they are the most simple and the most true; he seriously desired that peace and justice should prevail in the foreign policy of his country—that is to say, in order to express my meaning to his greater honour, he believed that morality and good sense are essential and practicable in the foreign relations, as well as in the internal government of States: a commonplace, apparently, which all politicians repeat with their lips, but which, in reality, very few of them truly believe.

With rare good fortune, or rather from a natural sympathy, Sir Robert Peel had intrusted the direction of foreign affairs, in his Cabinet, to a man animated with the same sentiments as himself, and better fitted than any one else to practise them. For five years, I transacted the business of our two countries with Lord Aberdeen, and treated with him on all the questions that arose during that period, *grande mortalis ævi spatium*. I do not see why I should deny myself the pleasure of saying, of his policy and of himself, what I think, and what I have personally seen and experienced. I pay no heed to affected reticence and modesty; now that I am far retired from the world, I feel no embarrassment in saying openly what I thought, felt, or desired, when I took part in its movement; and whether any honour results to my friends or to myself, I willingly avail myself of any opportunity of placing, in its true light, the policy which, in concert with them, I endeavoured to render triumphant.

As an ally of Sir Robert Peel, Lord Aberdeen possessed two inestimable advantages: he belonged to

the Tory party, at the most brilliant period of their history, in their days of victory, and yet he by no means shared in their prejudices, their passions, their obstinate or rancorous traditions; a man of unfettered yet judicious mind, as just as delicate, always ready to understand and admit the changes of time, the motives and merits of men; an aristocrat with simple manners, liberal sentiments, and a sympathetic character; a fine scholar, without literary pretensions; very reserved in public, but full of charm in the intimacy of private life; thoroughly English in principles and habits, and yet very familiar with the history, the ideas, the languages, and the interests of the peoples of the Continent. Like Peel, he desired that peace and justice should prevail in the mutual relations of States:—better than any one else, he knew how to discern and accept their conditions, and to employ only those means and that language which were calculated to secure their predominance; and by inspiring the men with whom he treated, with confidence in his moderation and equity, he disposed them to deal with him in the same spirit.

The confidence of these two men in one another could not but be, and was, entire. The Scottish noble frankly and simply admitted the supremacy of the son of the English cotton-spinner; the Parliamentary leader did not seek to direct foreign affairs, and to impose his own diplomatic views, tastes, and modes of action on his colleague. Agreeing in principle, they were sure that the one would not need to vindicate his authority, or the other his independence; they walked

loyally together in the same course, each in his own rank, and with his own duties to perform. Sir Robert Peel had no marked preference for any alliance, or for any particular friendship on the Continent; he set great value on maintaining good relations with France, with King Louis Philippe and his government, and he neglected no opportunity of expressing the sentiments, and holding the language best adapted to secure this condition of things; but he attached equal importance to being on good terms with Germany or with Russia, and was equally careful to manifest it. Lord Aberdeen, while keeping on the best terms with all the powers of Europe, had it chiefly at heart to establish a close friendship between England and France, as he was deeply convinced that the two nations that might do one another the most harm, are also most interested in living amicably together, and that great human interests, as well as their own national interests, are involved in their peaceful agreement.

The Conservative Cabinet, on assuming the direction of the State, found the position of affairs abroad beset with serious complications. In Asia, there was war with China and in Affghanistan; with the United States of America, three old controversies had been recently revived,—on the north, the settlement of the boundary question, on the west, the possession of Oregon, on the sea, the repression of the slave trade; and in Europe, France, which for more than a year had been in a state of irritation against England, had scarcely resumed her place in the European concert. This, while at this extremities of the world, Sir Robert

Peel and Lord Aberdeen had, by war or negociation, great and difficult questions to resolve, with their nearest neighbour they had to restore relations of friendliness.

I doubt whether two Governments ever existed that felt greater sympathy with one another than the Cabinets of London and Paris at that period, both in their views of general policy, and in their mutual tendencies; and whose harmonious intercourse was put more frequently and more tryingly to the test. In common with Sir Robert Peel and Lord Aberdeen, King Louis Philippe and his Cabinet in 1841 seriously and sincerely desired that peace and justice should prevail in the international relations of States. I have lived beneath the splendour of the greatest spectacles of force and war that the world has ever witnessed; as much as any other spectator, I have felt the proud and patriotic pleasure which those spectacles are calculated to inspire: but in the midst of our triumphs and of the national intoxication, the sacrifice of so many lives, the grief of so many families, the exhaustion of France, the continued perturbation of Europe, the rights of princes and the rights of peoples treated with equal disdain—victory serving only still further to extend the war—the absence of stability from the midst of an order devoid of liberty—the interminable concatenation of terrible chances and deeds of violence —filled me with deep sorrow. France desires and deserves something better than to be the stake in the hands of a great man bent unremittingly on trying the great hazards of fortune. It may still be said at the

present moment, notwithstanding the formidable conflict which has temporarily caused an interruption in this happy condition of Europe: for more than forty years we have been enjoying the blessings of peace; and this is one of those blessings which has been too little noticed. During this interval, two revolutions have occurred in our country; but neither of them has brought the foreigner within our borders, though he came twice within fifteen months against the Emperor Napoleon I. Notwithstanding her alarms, neither in 1830, nor even in 1848, did Europe feel herself under the necessity of making war against us; in 1815, peoples and kings alike thought it impossible to live in safety with Napoleon for a neighbour. But, though impossible under his rule, the policy of peace and moderation became after his overthrow, and remains at the present day, under the inheritor of his name and power, the policy of Europe. It will be the glory of King Louis Philippe that, in the midst of a strong revolutionary ferment, he boldly proclaimed and constantly practised this policy. All the merit of this conduct has been attributed to his prudence, and to a skilful calculation of personal interest. This is a mistake; even when large allowances have been made for interest and prudence, all has not been explained nor all said. The idea of peace, in its morality and grandeur, had taken very deep root in the mind and heart of King Louis Philippe; the iniquities and sufferings which war inflicts on men, often from excessively slight causes, or for the sake of vain combinations, were revolting to his humanity and his good

sense. Among the great social hopes, I will not say the beautiful chimeras, with which his epoch and his education had fed his youth, the idea of peace had struck him more powerfully than any other, and always retained its influence over his soul. Peace was in his eyes the true victory of civilization, a duty incumbent on him as man and as King; he thought it a pleasure and an honour to fulfil that duty, far more than from any considerations of safety. He rejoiced at the accession of the Conservative Cabinet to power in London, as affording a guarantee not only of peace, but of an equitable and tranquil policy, which in its turn is the only guarantee of true and lasting peace.

Three matters—the right of search for the suppression of the slave trade, the occupation of Tahiti, and the war in Morocco—disturbed, and almost succeeded in seriously compromising, our relations with England, from 1841 to 1846. I have no intention of entering into a narrative and discussion of these affairs in this place; I merely wish to characterise the spirit in which the two Cabinets treated them in concert, and averted the danger which might have arisen from them.

It is a commonplace, which was long repeated, and is probably still believed by many persons, that in her zeal for the introduction and extension of the right of search for the repression of the slave trade, England attached much more importance to the right of search than to the repression of the slave trade, and had it in view much rather to secure her own maritime preponderance than to exhaust the supplies of the slave-

market. Such an opinion betrays a strange ignorance of the history, and a very superficial appreciation of the character, of the English people. National egotism, it is true, occupies a large place in their character; they are more often swayed by interest than carried away by enthusiasm; they discern and pursue, with a cold and unbending sagacity, anything that can be of service to their prosperity or their power; but when a general idea, a moral conviction, has once taken possession of their soul, they unhesitatingly accept its consequences, however onerous, seek its success with persevering passionateness, and are capable of the greatest sacrifices in order to obtain it. This characteristic trait of England is strikingly exhibited in the history of her religious belief, of her political institutions, and even of her philosophical speculations. There is no people more attached to its interests, when its interests are at stake—no people more devoted to its faith, when it has a faith.

The abolition of slavery and the slave trade has been, for nearly a century, a real article of faith in England, an integral part of Christian belief, a moral passion, cherished at first by a small minority, but which never rested for a single day until it had won the majority, and subjugated even those minds that it failed to convince. It pursued its object in spite of all obstacles, and daunted by no efforts and no sacrifices. Undoubtedly the pleasure of gratifying the national pride, and the satisfaction of certain interests, may have mingled, and did mingle, with the performance of this generous design; but a moral feeling was its

real origin, and it was truly to obtain the abolition of the slave trade, and not miserably to trammel the trade of its rivals, by stopping a few ships here and there, that the English Government, controlled and urged forward by the English people, long insisted, with so much ardour and obstinacy, on the establish ment of the right of search.

During my embassy to London, ten days after the signing of the treaty of the 15th of July, 1840, in reference to the affairs of Egypt, Lord Palmerston assembled the representatives of Austria, France, Prussia, and Russia, at the Foreign Office, and invited us to sign, for the repression of the slave trade, a treaty by which the three northern powers accepted the conventions which had been concluded on this subject between France and England, in 1831 and 1833; and which moreover introduced certain modifications into the exercise of the right of search. This negociation had been commenced, pursued, and brought to the point at which it then stood, by my predecessors. I reported the proposal to M. Thiers, who at that time was chief of the Cabinet, and he replied: 'I will consult about the affair of the slave trade. I am just now afraid to make treaty after treaty with people who have behaved very badly to us.' M. Thiers was right; it was not at a moment when the English Cabinet had separated from us in so marked a manner, that it was fitting for us to give it a new proof of confidence and friendship.

A year later, at the end of 1841, the Whig Cabinet had fallen. The treaty of the 15th of July, 1840, on

longer existed; the affairs of Egypt and Mehemet Ali were at an end; the convention of the 13th of July, 1841, by regulating the relations of the five great powers with the Porte in regard to the passage of the Straits, had brought France once more into the European concert. Sir Robert Peel and Lord Aberdeen had succeeded Lord Melbourne and Lord Palmerston, and displayed the most friendly sentiments towards us. They requested me to sign the new treaty, which had long been prepared, for the more effectual repression of the slave trade. I no longer hesitated. No motive of expediency or of dignity required us further to delay its conclusion. We also desired the repression of the traffic. Ten years before, we had agreed to the reciprocal exercise of the right of search, in order to attain this object. Neither the complaints to which it had given rise, nor the modifications introduced by the new convention, appeared to me sufficient reasons to induce us to relinquish the moral duty which we had undertaken, and the political friendship which was connected with it. On the 20th of December, 1841, M. de Sainte-Aulaire, who for some few months had been our ambassador in London, signed the new treaty.

It is well known what storms this act drew down upon me. I have no right to complain of them. The contest in which I found myself involved in the Chambers, on this occasion, terminated in two results which it seemed difficult to reconcile. I succeeded in my efforts, for the Cabinets of Paris and London remained closely united, in spite of the efforts of the

Opposition to divide them; andthe object which the Opposition had pursued with a view to my defeat, turned to my advantage: by agreement between the two Cabinets, the right of search was abolished.

I do not wish there should be any misconception of my opinion; considering things in themselves, and abstracting the necessities of a position created by the passions of men, I did not then regard, nor do I now regard, the abolition of the right of search as a success. If generally and honestly practised, it was, I thiuk, the most effectual means of repressing the slave trade, and the repression of the slave trade was certainly worth the inconveniences and annoyances which resulted from the means, though these inconveniences were greatly exaggerated. But Prince Metternich said with reason: 'The vice of this mode of action is that it is practicable only between, I do not merely say governments, but countries that are on terms of the greatest intimacy, that are free from all susceptibility, all reciprocal distrust, and that are so thoroughly animated by the same feeling, as heartily to pass a sponge over all abuses.' This identity of feeling, this equality of zeal for the repression of the slave trade, did not exist between France and England; and so far from there being no susceptibility or distrust between the two peoples, the treaty of the 15th of July, 1840, had rekindled in France all the jealousies which the sympathy of England for France, after the events of 1830, had set at rest. I do not think that the antagonism which was exhibited, in 1842, to the right of search, as applied to the repres-

sion of the slave trade, was either just, or politic, or even perfectly spontaneous and natural; the ingenuity of the Opposition fomented the excitement, and the weakness of many Conservatives led them to believe far more than the actual truth. It is impossible to deny, however, that it soon became one of those contagious impressions against which reason, prudence, and even all ideas of right and justice, are powerless. Great was the surprise of the English Cabinet at this explosion of avowed distrust and ill-disguised hostility to England. Sir Robert Peel and Lord Aberdeen had been utter strangers to the wrong done us by their predecessors; the cause of our discontent had been removed; they had earnestly endeavoured to efface the last remaining traces of it; and they found it difficult to understand the bitterness of the suspicions, and the liveliness of the apprehensions, which treaties that had been in force for ten years had suddenly excited among us. And when I alleged the state of the public mind as a reason for refusing the ratification of the new treaty: 'Take care,' they said to me; 'these are motives which may have a determining weight with you, but which you must not expect us to appreciate in the same manner, for they are very insulting to us, and we cannot, consistently with our dignity, see them put forward without strongly resenting them. Our enemies have succeeded in spreading the belief in France that we are abominable hypocrites, who conceal Machiavellian intrigues beneath the affectation of ...rest in humanity. You find yourself under the ...sity of paying great regard to this popular

clamour, and we give sufficient proof of our good character by not taking offence at it; but if, in the face of Europe, you officially present us with these charges as the determining motive of your conduct, we cannot avoid repelling them, for our silence would imply a sort of admission of the accusation.'

Another idea also occupied the minds of the English ministers; they were engaged at the same moment in negociations with the United States for the repression of the slave trade, and they had flattered themselves that if the whole of Europe accepted the treaty of the 20th of December, 1841, with respect to the right of search, America also would end by assenting to it; and that, as the trade would then become almost impossible, they would have the honour of attaining the great object which England had long pursued with so much ardour. Not only by our refusal to ratify the treaty did they lose this hope, but the idea occurred to them that our refusal proceeded from an arrangement with the United States, and that we had secretly united with those States in order to frustrate the designs of England, in the old and the new world. It was more particularly in the naturally restless and distrustful mind of Sir Robert Peel that these suspicions fermented; honest men, though neither chimerical nor dupes, easily fall into extreme suspicions; and his mistrust sometimes appeared strangely in the midst of the good feeling and the sincere desire for a cordial understanding which animated him. Time, and those trials which time brings about in the relations of men with one another, were necessary

to convince him that we also were sincere, that he might put confidence in us even when our acts thwarted his policy, and that, in the affair of the right of search, among others, we merely yielded to a necessity, of which he was as well aware as ourselves —the necessity of respecting the feelings of our Chambers and of our country. Sir Robert Peel's mind was, besides, too just and too firm not to place his general policy above any particular question; he desired that, between England and France, and throughout all Europe, there should be peace, true peace, a tranquil and conservative policy; when he was well assured that this was, without any afterthought, our policy also, and that, in order to maintain it in our country, we had to make far greater efforts than were required of him in England, he resigned himself to the sacrifices which this policy forced him to make to us, and after having, in 1842, accepted our refusal to ratify the treaty of the 20th of December, 1841, in reference to the right of search, he acceded, in 1845, to the abolition of that right itself, and of the conventions of 1831 and 1833, which established it.

It was chiefly to Lord Aberdeen that this enlightened and conciliatory policy, so truly independent of party prejudices and of popular caprice, was indebted for its success in the Cabinet as well as in subsequent negociations. Annoyances were not spared him for his part in the matter; whilst in Paris I was accused of servile condescension to England, the same reproach was lavished on him in London—he was the

tool or the dupe of King Louis Philippe and of M. Guizot. Though sometimes saddened by these absurd imputations, he never allowed them to influence his conduct, never despaired of his wise policy, and, while very reserved in his language only, was of infinite patience in preparing and waiting for results. I have it at heart to give a just idea of the loyal intimacy which prevailed between us, and of the manner in which we transacted business together, in the midst of the embarrassments and suspicions which assailed us. I extract the following passages from a letter which I addressed to him on the 3rd of December, 1844, in reference to a suspicion which he had expressed to me regarding an incident which had occurred in Spain: 'The best thing, I think, for us both to do is to put into strict quarantine all the reports, rumours, complaints, and tittle-tattle, which may reach our ears regarding the secret intrigues or household quarrels of our agents:—and this for two reasons: first, because such stories are for the most part false; and secondly, because, even if they have some element of truth in them, they rarely deserve attention. Experience has convinced me, to my great regret, but, nevertheless, it has convinced me, that we could not yet expect to find in, or suddenly to instil into, our agents the same harmony, the same serenity of feeling and conduct which exist between you and me. Among our agents, scattered through the world, there are still remaining strong traces of that old unintelligent rivalry, that blind and annoying jealousy which long governed the policy of our two countries.

Petty personal passions add themselves to these feelings, and aggravate the evil. We must struggle, and struggle incessantly and universally against this evil, but we must still admit the fact that it is to a certain extent inevitable, and that we must, in a certain degree, submit to it. We should trouble our minds sadly, we should waste our strength in vain efforts, if we were to aim at preventing or repairing all the attacks, and all the mistakes, which may here and there be inflicted on our good understanding. If the attacks are serious, if they really compromise our policy and our reciprocal position, let us apply the remedy at once, in the first place, by telling each other everything, absolutely everything, in order to restore agreement between us, and secondly, by distinctly imposing our common will on our agents. But unless such occasions arise, let us pass over, without troubling ourselves about them, many difficulties, annoyances, ill-humours, and local misunderstandings, which would become important if we allowed them to reach us, and which will die out in the spot on which they arose, if we condemn them to remain within those limits.'

The two visits paid by the Queen of England to the Chateau d'Eu, in 1843 and 1845, when she was accompanied by Lord Aberdeen, and the visit of King Louis Philippe to Windsor Castle in 1844, when I had the honour of accompanying him, contributed greatly to develop between us that general good understanding, that prompt confidence, that pre-established harmony (if, in politics, I may be per-

mitted to use that fine expression of Leibnitz), which it is almost impossible to hope for when persons have never met each other, and enjoyed the freedom of long and friendly conversations. At Windsor, I had also long conversations with Sir Robert Peel, and with the Duke of Wellington (whose great judgment and authority still subsisted in the midst of very apparent physical decline), on the various questions which then occupied our attention, and particularly on the right of search; and, notwithstanding the extreme reserve of their language, notwithstanding the still great uncertainty of their intentions, I returned fully persuaded that the English Cabinet would ere long itself admit that, after the discussions which had been raised, and amid the quicksands which had with difficulty been avoided during the last three years, the right of search between France and England was, as regarded the repression of the slave trade, a vain form and an ineffectual weapon, whereas it was fraught with constant danger to the friendly relations of the two countries. The Duke de Broglie, by consenting to pursue the negociations on this subject in London, determined their happy issue; he had signed the convention of 1833; all England knew with what sincerity and constancy he had advocated the abolition of slavery and the slave trade; all England placed entire confidence both in his general character, and in his views of this particular question. Dr. Lushington, who was appointed by the English Government to negociate with him, possessed similar merit and authority, in the

opinion of his countrymen. Together they overcame, though not without labour, the still great difficulties of the question; the naval officers, selected to assist them in studying its practical details—among others, Captain Bouet for France, and Captain Trotter for England—were animated with the same good-will, and the same desire to effect a successful arrangement. On the 29th of May, 1845, a treaty was signed which substituted for the right of search a new method of concerted action, between France and England, for the repression of the slave trade, and this cloud disappeared from the horizon.

In the affair of the right of search, it was France who had proved herself susceptible, and demanded a new arrangement between the two States; in the affair of Tahiti, it was England who believed herself offended and entitled to demand reparation. Not that the English government itself was, at the origin of this incident, greatly interested in the question. In the year 1827, during the ministry of Mr. Canning, it had formally refused to take possession of the island of Tahiti, which had been offered to it by the native chiefs, and it consequently had no rights of its own to assert against the establishment of the French protectorate; but in this matter we found ourselves in presence of another important English power, to which, though it had no political title, Sir Robert Peel and Lord Aberdeen were obliged to pay great attention and respect.

It is an assertion, admitted as a fact, and constantly repeated by most Catholic journals, that Protestantism

is altogether on the decline, that it no longer numbers among its professors any but persons who are either utterly indifferent to religious matters, or eager to return into the bosom of the Catholic Church; and that, in a word, it is everywhere growing cold and decomposed like a dead body. A curious instance of the frivolous ignorance into which men may be led by passion! I might invite those who take pleasure in this idea to go into England and to see with their own eyes how living, how widely-spread, and how constant are the faith and practice of Protestant Christianity in that country; I might take them into Holland, into Germany, into Sweden, into the United States of America, into France even, and show them how everywhere among Protestants, religious faith and fervour are reviving and spreading by the side of the learned or vulgar, the fanatical or apathetic, incredulity of the day—a malady with which, assuredly, in the Christian world, Protestant States are not alone afflicted; but I pass by this controversy on religious statistics, and wish merely to direct attention to one fact, with which the affair of Tahiti is intimately connected, and which can alone explain the importance it assumed.

I have before my eyes the printed reports of thirty-two voluntary English societies, devoted to the propagation or maintenance of Protestant Christianity throughout the world. I sum up the means of action and the labours of the six principal of these societies for the year 1846, the last of which I have an accurate account, and I find that these six English Pro-

testant Missionary Societies received in aid of their work during that single year, the sum of 548,725*l.*, and expended 527,408*l.* At the same period they had in activity, scattered over the whole face of the world, 1,752 missionaries, including 16 bishops, and exclusive of several thousand assistant-missionaries, such as schoolmasters, teachers and other Christian labourers of various denominations.[1] I know it for a fact, that since 1846, the revenue and the number of agents employed in this general work of English Protestant missions have notably increased.

It was one of the most influential and active of these pious associations, the London Missionary Society, which had sent its missionaries into the island

[1] These six great English Missionary Societies are:—

1. *The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, founded in 1698. In 1846 its revenue was 97,559*l.*, its expenditure 93,550*l.*

2. *The Church Missionary Society*, founded in 1701. In 1846 its revenue was 115,259*l.*, its expenditure 93,846*l.* Its missions were distributed over sixteen dioceses, and it employs 378 missionaries.

3. *The Baptist Missionary Society*, founded in 1792. In 1846 its revenue was 22,586*l.*, and its expenditure 27,589*l.* It maintained 200 stations and 150 missionaries, with a large number of assistants.

The Baptists, moreover, have four societies for special missions, which, in 1846, had an income of 14,654*l.*, and expended 14,210*l.*

4. *The London Missionary Society*, founded in 1795. In 1846 its income was 79,545*l.*, and its expenditure 74,497*l.* It supported 70 stations and 244 missionaries.

5. *The Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East*, founded in 1800. In 1846 its revenue was 106,059*l.*, and its expenditure 96,662*l.* It supported 105 stations, and more than 600 missionaries.

6. *The Wesleyan Missionary Society*. Its labours began in 1786, and it was organized in 1816. In 1846 its income was 112,823*l.*, its expenditure 112,056*l.* It maintained 263 principal stations, and 364 missionaries, in addition to a very large number of assistant-missionaries, schoolmasters, catechists, &c.

of Tahiti. They had resided there for a long while, labouring zealously for the conversion and civilization of the native inhabitants. I say for the civilization as well as the conversion. When the Jesuits established themselves in Paraguay, they did not rest satisfied with preaching and converting; they applied themselves to civilize, by governing, the new Christian people. In spite of the profound differences of belief, and probably also of the strong feelings of antipathy, which separate them from the Jesuits, the Protestant missionaries bear a remarkable analogy to them in a social point of view. When they carried Christianity to the Indians of Paraguay, the Jesuits did not come as simple apostles, solely bent on planting the Cross and spreading the Divine Word in an idolatrous world: they were an organised society, an offshoot of a congregation ancient and powerful elsewhere, a great religious family, to use their own language, who transported themselves into the midst of savage tribes, in order to bring them to live under the law of a Christian authority, at the same time that they preached to them the Christian faith. Professing very different principles, Protestant missionaries have a similar character; they are no longer isolated individuals, exclusively devoted to the work of Christian apostleship; they are Christian families, who go and live among the heathen, to teach them, with the authority of example as well as of speech, Christian manners, Christian domestic virtues, Christian civilisation as developed in their own native land. They also proclaim and preach the Gospel; they die,

if need be, for the Gospel; but, until death or success arrives, they live in accordance with the Gospel, in all the natural relations of men, before the eyes of the nations whom they desire to bring beneath the sway of the Gospel. They are Christian husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, parents and children, brothers and sisters, masters and servants, at the same time that they are missionaries and English people. I detest jealous comparisons; no one respects and admires more than I do the Catholic missionaries who go forth to live and die alone in a hostile world, with no other business and no other joy than the propagation of the Christian faith, and with no other prospect in their austere and solitary labour, than the salvation of some poor benighted souls and the chance of martyrdom; but God points out different paths to his servants, and the missionary family, in its virtuous activity, is assuredly neither less pleasing in His eyes, nor less useful in His service, than the missionary priest in his pious isolation.

The English missionaries in Tahiti were real moral magistrates, possessed of great power over both the population and the chiefs, revered preachers and reformers, enjoying at once the success of their teaching and the pleasures of domination. The establishment of the French Protectorate was naturally unpleasant to them; it involved a danger to their faith, the downfall of their preponderance, and a check on the reputation of their country in the Pacific Ocean. As soon as the news reached London, all the missionary societies grew excited, held meetings, sent deputations

to the English Cabinet and to the French Ambassador, declaring that their labours were endangered throughout Polynesia, and demanding that the joint Protectorate of England, France, and the United States of America should be substituted, in Tahiti, for the exclusive Protectorate of France. Eleven of the principal supporters of these societies, all of them men influential by their character as well as by their rank, addressed a pressing letter to Lord Aberdeen in support of these demands.[1] One of them, Sir George Grey, expressed his intention to interrogate Ministers in the House of Commons. The movement became still stronger when, a few months afterwards, it was discovered that it was not a mere French Protectorate which had been established in Tahiti, but that Admiral Dupetit-Thouars had taken full possession of the island and its sovereignty. The saints burned with indignation; even those politicians who were least devout and most friendly to France were troubled; Sir George Grey interrogated Sir Robert Peel in the House of Commons, and he replied evasively, and with an emotion which he found it hard to restrain. Foreign diplomatists themselves regarded the matter with lively solicitude, thinking it very serious indeed. 'Tahiti,' said one of them, 'will be a greater difficulty than Ireland to the English Cabinet.' Extreme coolness, if not an utter rupture,

[1] This letter was signed by the Marquis of Cholmondeley, the Bishop of Chester, the Bishop of Chichester, the Earl of Galloway, Lord Bexley, Lord Ashley (now the Earl of Shaftesbury), Lord Sandon (now the Earl of Harrowby), Lord Teignmouth, Sir George Grey, Sir Thomas Baring, and Sir Robert Inglis.

between France and England, seemed to be its inevitable consequence.

The English Cabinet was greatly agitated. Even before the Tahiti question arose, on hearing the news of our occupation of the Marquesas Islands, many symptoms of displeasure and disquietude had been exhibited among the friends of the Government; 'it is a disgrace and a danger to England,' said a thinking man to Lord Aberdeen. Jealous hostility to France is no longer a general and permanent feeling in England, nor has it any sway over the policy of the country; but it is a feeling which still lives in many English hearts, and may be easily aroused with all its susceptibility, blindness, and unreason. Sir Robert Peel, without sharing these impressions, readily lent his ear to them, and treated them with great consideration. Another feeling, the fear of being taken for a dupe, strongly occupied his mind. 'Was it very certain that Admiral Dupetit-Thouars had not acted in obedience to secret instructions from the French Government? Had we not ourselves instructed him to seize upon the first pretext for transforming our Protectorate into complete and sovereign possession of Tahiti? Why had we three frigates in those seas? They were assuredly not necessary to awe the natives of Tahiti; we had doubtless anticipated a more serious conflict.' In order to maintain a policy of conciliatory and friendly understanding between the two countries, Lord Aberdeen had constantly to struggle both against these public impressions and these private feelings of distrust; he had not only to prevent any sudden

or excessive resolution or proceeding on the part of the Cabinet, but frequently also, and this was perhaps his most difficult task, to keep back the head of the Government from uttering those words of suspicion or irritation, which, in the heat or perplexity of debate in the House of Commons, Sir Robert was prone to let fall.

Lord Aberdeen judged wisely of the position, and gave proof of as much sagacity as prudence. In this whole affair we had not, nor ever had had, any secret design, or afterthought, or even desire, beyond what our acts and words clearly indicated. We wished to acquire in the Pacific Ocean a point which would serve at once as a healthy and safe penal settlement, and a station to which our mercantile navy might resort for supplies or for refuge, without involving ourselves in the burdens and risks of a great territorial establishment. The little archipelago of the Marquesas seemed to fulfil these conditions; it belonged to no other Power; Admiral Dupetit-Thouars received directions to occupy it. No mention was made of Tahiti in his instructions, and we had absolutely formed no design, either present or future, upon that island. When we learned that, four months after the occupation of the Marquesas, Admiral Dupetit-Thouars, in consequence of a series of complicated incidents which I shall not recapitulate here, had been led to establish the French Protectorate in Tahiti, we foresaw, not without regret, that some difficulties might result from this proceeding in regard to our relations with England; but we ratified the act unhesitatingly. Of all our reasons for

doing so, I remember but one, and that was the decisive reason—the French flag had just been planted in the islands of Polynesia; we could not consent that, at the very moment of its appearance, it should be withdrawn. We interfered neither with the rights, nor even with the pretensions, of any other State; the treaty concluded by Admiral Dupetit-Thouars, when he established our Protectorate, respected the sovereignty and internal prerogatives of the Queen of Tahiti. We openly avowed the reasons and the limits of our resolution. The English Cabinet understood them, and made no remonstrance. In our turn, we understood its displeasure and its embarrassments; and we mutually promised one another to observe that prudence and forbearance which should be observed, in affairs that are at once small and delicate, by great Governments which are willing neither to bow the one before the other, nor to quarrel about trifles.

I say trifles, and while I retain this word, I think it well to explain my meaning. I would not, on any account, be suspected of undervaluing the greatness of the interests and feelings engaged in this question—of Christian interests and feelings. As a Protestant, and a minister of a Catholic King, in a country enjoying religious liberty, but essentially Catholic, I have never sought to surmount the difficulties of my position otherwise than by accepting it in all its bearings, and by fulfilling all its various, but not, as I think, opposed duties. I have openly held my faith while serving the policy of my country; I have freely supported the policy of my country while retaining my

faith. In the Tahiti affair, the trial was, to me, a delicate one; Catholicism, Protestantism, and politics, were there in presence of one another; and I may be allowed here to recapitulate the principles on which I relied, in order to reconcile their conflicting claims, not after the affair was settled, but at the very moment of the trial, and in the midst of the battle. 'It would be,' I said, in the Chamber of Deputies, on the 10th of June, 1843, and the 1st of March, 1844, 'it would be an insensate enterprise, I can use no other term, for a Government to undertake to carry on a religious propagandism, and to impose its religion by force even on pagans. . . . . England does not do this. There are English missionaries, actuated solely by a desire to spread Christianity, and who spontaneously and freely, at their own risk and peril, without any intervention on the part of the English Government, carry their activity and devotedness all over the face of the earth, in order to spread their faith. They have the right to do so; they are not the Government of their country. But wherever they penetrate, they carry the faith, the language, the name, the influence of their country; and their Government, who are aware of this, who reap the fruits of their activity, watch over them, support them, protect them wherever they go. In this, the Government also do their duty; each has his appropriate task; the free missionaries labour for the propagation of their religious belief, while on the Government devolves the protection of all their subjects, even missionaries, wherever they may be. France also has

her missionaries; before you turned your attention to the matter, sincere, courageous, devoted men, Catholic priests, were doing in the world, with the French language and name, what the English missionaries are doing in the name of their country. They were doing this in the very regions which now occupy our attention, in the archipelagos of the Pacific Ocean; they were labouring to win over to their faith the Gambier Islands, the Navigators' Islands, New Zealand, and many other countries. Why should not the French Government do for the French Catholic missionaries, all that the English Government do for the English Protestant missionaries? Why should we not watch over them, and cover them with our protection? . . . The history, the traditions, the natural position of France, require us to do so. . . . Because religious liberty is happily established in France, because Catholics and Protestants live in peace on the same soil, and under the same law,—should that be a reason why France should abandon her history, her traditions, the religion of her fathers, and should cease to protect that religion throughout the world? No, certainly not: France has received religious liberty into her own land, and she will carry it wherever she goes. I do not see why France should not do in Polynesia, in French settlements, what she does at home, on her ancient territory. It will be a difficult matter, I may be told; it will entail embarrassments, complications. It is the business of governments to do difficult things, to be equal to any complications that may present themselves. . . . . We have promised and guaran-

teed, to the English missionaries who reside in Tahiti, liberty, protection, and security; and I do not hesitate to say, that the English Government has full confidence in our word; but the promise that we have given, we have to demand also for ourselves. Elsewhere than in Tahiti, in New Zealand for example, Catholic missionaries have established themselves; a French bishop is at their head; they are under the authority of England; we require that they should there enjoy the same liberty, the same security that we guarantee to the English missionaries in Tahiti. . . . . Everywhere throughout Polynesia the Catholic religion and the Protestant religion are working side by side; both are being spread at the same time. . . . . It is a noble sight to see these different missions labouring peaceably and freely for the propagation of the Christian faith; but it is a difficult, delicate, perilous sight, which can only continue on condition that it is protected by the good understanding and harmony of the two great Governments, beneath whose sway these missions are carried on. On the day that this good understanding shall cease, from the midst of that ocean, tempests will arise; these religious missions, Catholic and Protestant, will become principles of discord, causes of war. If then you are desirous that this great work, as salutary as it is noble, shall continue and prosper, make it your endeavour to maintain harmony between the two powerful Governments that protect it. And when those two Governments are themselves agreed on this point, when they promise one another, when they

actually give one another, in the regions of which I am speaking, all the liberty, all the guarantees that are required for the work to which I refer, do not allow it to depend on the will of a single man, however honourable, however courageous, however devoted to his country he may be—and I am not going to contest the possession of any one of these merits by Admiral Dupetit-Thouars—do not, I say, allow it to depend on the will of a single man to disturb such a state of things, and to rupture the good understanding and harmony between the two great countries, under whose protection this work is carried on, which alone can secure its duration and success.'

This policy, put frankly into practice, and adopted by the Chambers after violent debates, produced on the English Cabinet the effect which we had a right to anticipate. As soon as it was known that we had not ratified the taking sovereign possession of Tahiti, and that we limited ourselves to maintaining the protectorate which had been accepted eighteen months previously by the natives, all ill-humour and distrust disappeared; Sir Robert Peel hastened to acknowledge our loyal moderation; and Lord Aberdeen no longer met with any doubt or objection on the part of his colleagues, with regard to the measures which he proposed to take for the purpose of removing from Tahiti those agents who might involve us in fresh embarrassments. The affair seemed settled.

But affairs do not end so easily or so quickly, when, after having treated with the policy of a Government, you find yourself still in presence of the

liberty and faith of a people. Far more solicitous about the work in which they were engaged, than careful of the principles of international law and State diplomacy, the English Missionary Societies could not bear to see Tahiti pass beneath the rule of a foreign and Catholic power. We promised liberty and protection to their missionaries, but they doubted the permanent efficacy of our promises. They had lost at once their predominance and their security. Either from premeditated purpose, or acting on the impulse of the moment, they zealously employed themselves to procure the overthrow, in Tahiti itself, of that French Protectorate, the establishment of which they had had neither the right nor the power to prevent. To what extent their directors and patrons in London entered into this design I do not know, nor do I care to inquire; the passion which animated those societies had no need of previous orders or avowed co-operation from their head-quarters, in order to act; nor did they wait for any—their agents and friends, the missionaries attached to their service, and seamen devoted to their cause, naturally and spontaneously resisted the French Protectorate, and united their efforts, both public and secret, isolated and combined, in order to trammel or destroy it. At Tahiti, several of the English missionaries established in the island, either from greater moderation of character, or because they were more exclusively devoted to their religious duties, and more free from the influences of human passion, kept aloof from these intrigues, openly declaring, that 'as ministers of the Gospel of Peace,

they should consider it their imperative duty to exhort the people of those islands to a peaceable and uniform obedience to the powers that be, considering that by such means their interests would be best promoted, but more especially as such obedience is required by the law of God, which they had until then made it their special business to inculcate.' But this pious resignation on the part of a few men could not put a stop to the conflict which had been commenced against the French establishment. Mr. Pritchard, who combined the office of agent to the mission with that of British Consul at Tahiti, was at the head of this movement. I do not know Mr. Pritchard, and I do not wish to be guilty of any error or injustice with regard to himself or his personal character: this much is certain, that when it became necessary for me to make careful inquiries as to what he had previously been and done, I found that he had resided in Tahiti since 1836, an active, stirring, influential man, passionately hostile to any foreign intervention or action, and to the slightest French and Catholic appearance in the island. He was absent in September, 1842, when Admiral Dupetit-Thouars established the Protectorate; but he returned on the 28th of February, 1843, and as soon as he had returned, the anti-French fermentation, which until then had been feeble and obscure, became strong and continuous. When the incidents of this conflict determined Admiral Dupetit-Thouars, on the 5th of November following, to assume the sovereignty instead of the Protectorate of Tahiti, Mr. Pritchard imme-

diately hauled down his flag, and declared that his functions as Consul were at an end, as he was not accredited by the English Government to a French colony in that capacity; but though he abdicated his public character, he did not the less continue his efforts to excite resistance and even sedition against the French authorities in the island; and after the lapse of four months, on the 3rd of March, 1844, during the absence of the governor, who had been called to a distant part of the island by an insurrectionary movement, Captain D'Aubigny, the Provisional Commandant at Papeiti, thought it indispensable suddenly to arrest Mr. Pritchard, and to place him in solitary confinement in a block-house. On his return to Papeiti, a few days afterwards, M. Bruat, reporting this incident on the 21st of March to the Minister of Marine, stated, 'In the agitated state of the country, this measure was necessary, but I could approve neither of the form nor of the motive of the arrest. However, the gravity of the circumstances was such that I could not undo what had been done, without discouraging our party and strengthening the insurgents. On my arrival, I at once ordered that Mr. Pritchard should be transferred from the block-house on board the *Meurthe*, and I gave Commandant Guillevin directions to receive him at his table . . . . I also wrote to the English Captain of the *Cormorant*, to request him to leave Papeiti, where he had nothing to do, and to take with him Mr. Pritchard, whom I promised to place in his hands as soon as his ship should leave the harbour.'

When Mr. Pritchard arrived in England, on the 26th of July, and gave his own account of his arrest, probably extenuating its causes but not its unpleasantnesses, all the feelings which had been excited at the commencement of the Tahiti affair, and which hitherto had been somewhat kept in check, burst forth in clubs, drawing-rooms, newspapers, and Parliament. In reply to a question put to him by Sir Charles Napier on the 31st of July, Sir Robert Peel at once stated, if the newspaper reports are to be relied on: 'We have received accounts from Tahiti, and presuming on the accuracy of these accounts, which I have no reason whatever to call in question, I do not hesitate to say, that a gross outrage, accompanied with gross indignity, has been committed upon the British Consul in that island. Her Majesty's Government received information of this on Monday last, and the first opportunity was taken of making those communications to the French Government which her Majesty's Government considered the circumstances of the case to call for . . . . Assuming that the statements we have received are correct, I must presume that the French Government will at once make that reparation which this country has a right to require.'

On reading the newspapers which reported these words, my own surprise was great, and there was a very strong feeling excited in the Chambers. We had received no communication from the British Government; at the time when Sir Robert Peel spoke, we had not yet made any to it; on neither side had the

facts been examined and verified; how, then, could he have expressed himself with such hasty and inaccurate asperity? When interrogated in my turn in both Chambers, I resolved to pursue a course of the completest reserve on the subject. 'In this affair,' I said, 'there are questions of fact and questions of right to be cleared up between the two Governments. Questions of foreign policy pass through various phases, and they cannot be introduced into this Chamber indiscriminately at any phase. The door must not be opened to them whenever they knock at it. There is a time when discussion throws light on these questions, but there is also a time when it sets them on fire. The tribunes of these Chambers must not be made like the public newspapers, which every morning state and discuss whatever they may know of the affairs that may be pending between Governments. Convinced as I am, that both to the general interests of the country, and to the question itself now before us, serious inconveniences would arise from our discussing it at this moment, I absolutely refuse to do so. When it has followed its natural course—when the opinion and conduct of his Majesty's Government have been maturely determined on—when all questions of fact and right have been cleared up between the two Governments, then I shall be ready, then I shall be the first to come here to state and discuss what the Government has done, and what were the motives on which it acted; but until then I shall keep silence.'

This was evidently the only sensible and useful

attitude to assume. The close of our session made it easier for me to do this than it would have been a few weeks earlier. I have no intention to dwell longer on an affair which then created so great a sensation, and now appears so ridiculous. Nor can I with propriety relate the delicate negotiation to which it gave rise between Lord Aberdeen and myself. All these petulancies, all these difficulties, all these dangers,—which are the natural accompaniments of a free Government, and which are so often used as arms in attacking Governments of this nature,—ended in results just in themselves, honourable to the two Cabinets, and salutary to the two countries. When his attention was called to the unseasonableness and inaccuracy of the words he had first used, Sir Robert Peel intimated to me that he did not admit any of the versions of his speech which had appeared in the newspapers to be correct. When the facts had been thus thoroughly explained and discussed, the French Cabinet maintained on the one hand its right to remove from any of its colonial establishments any foreign resident who might disturb the public order, and on the other hand asserted its conviction that the French authorities at Tahiti had had good reasons for sending Mr. Pritchard away from the island. At the same time, it acknowledged that useless and vexatious proceedings had been taken respecting him, and expressed its disapprobation and regret that this should have been the case. It offered to award to him, as compensation for the losses and sufferings which these proceedings had occasioned him, such an indemnity as might be fixed

by the French and English Admirals who were about to set out to take the command of their respective fleets in the Pacific Ocean. The English Cabinet, on its side, no longer disputed either the principles or the facts maintained by the French Government; it gave up the idea of sending Mr. Pritchard back to Tahiti, and of demanding the recall of the officer who had arrested him. The affair was thus brought not merely to an official conclusion, but to an equitable termination—a termination sincerely accepted as equitable by both parties; so that on the 24th of January following I was able to say with truth, in the Chamber of Deputies, 'This is called *entente cordiale*, good understanding, friendship, alliance. There is something in it more rare, more novel, and more grand than all that. There are at the present day, in France and in England, two Governments who think that there is room enough in the world for the prosperity, for the material and moral activity of the two countries—two Governments that do not think themselves obliged to regret, to deplore, to fear each other's progress, but think that they can, by freely displaying their forces of every kind, mutually assist instead of injuring one another. And the two Governments that think they can do this, think also that it is their duty to do it—that they owe it to the honour and the welfare of their country, to the peace and civilization of the world. And that which they consider possible and their duty, these two Governments actually do; they put these ideas into practice; they manifest on every occasion a mutual respect for each other's rights, a mutual consi-

deration for each other's interests, a mutual confidence in each other's intentions and words. This is what they do; and this is why the most delicate, the most seirous incidents do not lead to a rupture between them, or even to a coolness in the relations between the two countries.'

I was fully justified in using this language, for Lord Aberdeen and the Queen of England herself had used it with me and before me. On the 6th of September, 1844, Lord Aberdeen wrote to Lord Cowley: 'It is indeed my conviction that the sincere desire entertained by the two Governments to cultivate the best and most cordial understanding, renders it scarcely possible that occurrences of this description, if viewed dispassionately and treated in a spirit of justice and moderation, should ever lead to any other than an amicable and happy termination.' And on the 5th of September, in proroguing the session of Parliament in the Queen's name, the Lord Chancellor had said: 'Her Majesty has recently been engaged in discussions with the Government of the King of the French on events calculated to interrupt the good understanding and friendly relations between this country and France. You will rejoice to learn that by the spirit of justice and moderation which has animated the two Governments, this danger has been happily averted.'

Without exciting the English public so greatly as our occupation of Tahiti had done, our war with Morocco, which broke out at the same period, increased the embarrassments of our international policy. England was growing slowly and painfully accustomed to

believe that our establishment in Algeria was an accomplished and positive fact; but while regarding that establishment as precarious, she greatly dreaded its extension, especially towards the west, at the expense of the Empire of Morocco, over against Gibraltar. Frivolous boasts excite credulous apprehensions; the absurd phrase—'The Mediterranean ought to be a French lake'—was a source of alarm to many minds in England. When they saw a French army, under the command of the Governor-General of Algeria, enter Morocco, and a French squadron, under the command of a Prince of the blood royal, appear before Tangier, the disquietude was great, and Sir Robert Peel, who was always very attentive to popular impressions, took up the matter seriously. Pressing instructions were sent from London, ordering the English Consul-General at Tangier to use all the influence of England to induce the Emperor of Morocco to comply with the demands of France, and to put a stop to the war. The English Cabinet would have wished us to leave to it the task of obtaining for us the justice which we sought, and it would have spared no pains on our behalf; but it was our policy to make Morocco conscious of our strength by doing justice to ourselves. However little we desired to make new conquests in Africa, we were firmly determined to put those that we had made on a secure footing, by allowing no one to disturb us in them, and showing that we needed no foreign aid in order to maintain them. The Prince de Joinville, by bombarding within the space of ten days, the two principal seaports of Morocco,

Tangier and Mogador,—and Marshal Bugeaud, by routing the whole army of Morocco in a single engagement on the banks of the Isly—rapidly carried the policy of France to the end at which it aimed. The Prince de Joinville accomplished the work with as much sagacity as prudence, by taking upon himself to enter at once into negotiations for peace as resolutely as he had prosecuted the war; and the Morocco question was settled, without inflicting any injury on our good understanding with England, under the eyes of her sailors and amid the journeyings to and fro of her agents, who eagerly offered us their good offices, which we willingly accepted, as we were able to dispense with them.

Christian Europe has reason to desire that no private ambition may hasten the downfal of those dilapidated Mussulman States that are languishing and falling into ruin at her gates. The interests of European order take precedence of all questions of future destiny; and it is not fitting that the policy of justice and peace should furnish an example of crafty or aggressive violence, even towards barbarism and chaos. Providence, however, has issued visible decrees, and we have a right to be preconscious of them and to hold ourselves in readiness to acknowledge them, if we have no right to hasten their accomplishment for a selfish purpose. The Turks will go out of Europe. The Barbarescoes will lose what remaining empire they possess in the north of Africa, to the east and west of what they have already lost. The Christian faith and Christian civilization will not give up their

expansive energy. At what period, and by what combinations, will they recover possession of those fine countries which they daily hem in more closely? No one can tell; but no one can doubt that this future is in store for them. It is an act of prudence as well as of moral sense for all Christian States to pay great regard to this in their policy, and not to place themselves in direct and permanent conflict with facts which will infallibly one day come to pass, and which, when they do come to pass, will be a triumph for humanity.

In September, 1844, three years after the accession of Sir Robert Peel's Cabinet to power, and at the moment when its third Parliamentary session was about to close, two of the affairs which had well-nigh disturbed the friendy relations of England with France, the affairs of Tahiti and of Morocco, were settled; the third, that of the right of search, was progressing towards an amicably-arranged settlement. In the same lapse of time, the British Government had victoriously ended the war, and concluded peace, with China. After having repaired, by a vigorous campaign, the reverses of the English arms in Affghanistan, it had, with wise and candid firmness, renounced a conquest which it was difficult to make, and difficult and dangerous to keep, when made. By a treaty signed at Washington on the 9th of August, 1842, it had settled with the United States of America the limits of the frontiers of the two powers in the north, and the mode in which they were to co-operate for the repression of the slave-trade: their difference with

regard to the possession of Oregon alone remained in suspense. Sir Robert Peel and Lord Aberdeen had thus, in three years, without any infraction of peace, without any serious perturbation of friendly relations between powers, but on the contrary by maintaining or restoring a good understanding everywhere, settled all the questions of foreign policy which they found pending when they took the direction of affairs, and all those which had arisen during their administration. And they had themselves provoked none: they had sought to obtain strength or distinction for their power, in no premature event, in no factitious complication. They had sufficed for all that they found, and had originated none. This is the true character, the sensible and moral character, of good foreign policy. It does not consider peoples as instruments which it may use to win success for its own inventions, and the combinations of its own ambitious or restless spirit; it transacts their business with foreign powers as it arises in natural course, and calls for a necessary solution; ever regarding peace as its object, and right as its law. It was the happy condition of France and England at this period that their two Governments were animated by the same spirit, and loyally lent each other a mutual support, in order to make it prevail.

CHAPTER XII.

Opening of the Session of 1844.—Sir Robert Peel's devotion to business.—The Bank Charter.—The Grant to Maynooth.—Great opposition in Parliament and in the country to its increase.—Speech of Sir Robert Peel.—Sir Robert Inglis.—Mr. Plumptre.—Colonel Sibthorp.—Course taken by the Radicals and dissentient Tories.—Mr. Disraeli.—Course taken by the Whigs.—Speech of Mr Macaulay.—Exasperation outside the walls of Parliament.—Continuance of the debate, and closing Speech of Sir Robert Peel.—The Bill carried.—Secular Colleges.

WHILST abroad the policy of Sir Robert Peel was maintaining or restoring peace and friendly relations all over the world, at home the return of public prosperity and the re-establishment of order in the finances justified and strengthened his administration. At the opening of the session of 1844, one of his young and faithful friends, Mr. Cardwell, in a speech in support of the Address, laid before the House of Commons, without emphasis but with precision, the proofs of this deserved good fortune; and at the end of the debate, Sir Robert himself referred to it with prudent and modest frankness. 'I trust,' he said, 'that the House believes that we do meet Parliament in the present year under improved circumstances. . . . . The balance between our revenue and expenditure is equalized; and, at any rate, we have

this year put a stop to the accumulation of debt. The depression which visited some of the great interests of this country, and which caused such deprivation and suffering among the working classes, is at least, in a considerable degree, converted into growing prosperity—a prosperity which, I trust, will become still greater. I know perfectly well that, although suffering and privation are relieved, there still exists, in many parts of the country, distress which we cannot view without sympathy; but this I trust also is in the course of being lessened, if not removed. And, on the whole, I do trust, that I am justified in stating, that in the performance of our duties towards the Crown and the country, with respect both to foreign relations, the condition of trade, and the state of the revenue, we are enabled to present ourselves before the assembled Parliament as having fulfilled the expectations which we held out as to the prospects of the empire, and the effects of the measures we proposed; and that you will deem we have not been wanting in the duties which we owe to our sovereign and the country.'

But in free Governments success is not a title to repose; and hopes when realized, far from appeasing, increase the desires of nations. This is the condition imposed by the selfish impatience of peoples upon their worthiest servants. Sir Robert Peel knew this, and was neither surprised nor discouraged by it; devoted from his very birth by paternal ambition to a political life, he had early contracted its laborious and vigorous habits, not without some suffering to his sus-

ceptible nature, in which timidity combined with high-spiritedness, and which, moreover, was keenly alive to the delights of domestic life. The affairs of England were his affairs; the House of Commons was the exercise-ground or the battle-field on which he treated them; he accepted the labours they involved as his mission in life, and the sorrows they caused as his natural and inevitable condition. He was a public man in the noblest and completest acceptation of the term, making the service of his country his business as well as his duty, and devoting himself entirely to it without heeding its unpleasantnesses, though he felt them sorely. During the two sessions of 1844 and 1845, he displayed an inexhaustible activity and aptitude; ever ready and on the watch, in regard to the little incidents as well as the great interests of Government, and skilful in securing success, though he had not the gift of pleasing. I have no intention to follow him through the numerous political and administrative questions which he was called upon to discuss; it is my desire to paint the man, and not to write the history of the time. I shall dwell only on two special matters, great among great affairs, and which, moreover, have this remarkable characteristic, that they were not imposed by necessity on Sir Robert Peel, and that, instead of avoiding them, as he might have done, he, so to speak, originated them himself by an act of his own will, and with a view to the public welfare, as much as for the satisfaction of his own mind and the glory of his name.

In 1833, a bill proposed by Lord Althorp, who was

then Chancellor of the Exchequer, had maintained the Bank of England in possession of its constitution and privileges until 1855; with this proviso, that before the expiration of this term, and after ten years from the date of the measure, Parliament should be at liberty to revise the Bank Charter, and to make in it such modifications as it might think fit. The ten years had expired: on the 6th of May, 1844, Sir Robert Peel proposed, with some solemnity, the revision of the Bank Charter. 'There are occasionally,' he said, 'questions of such vast and manifest importance, and which prefer such a claim, I should rather say, such a demand, on the attention of the House, that all rhetorical prefaces, dilating on their magnitude, or enjoining the duty of patient consideration, are superfluous and impertinent. I shall, therefore, proceed at once to call the attention of the House to a matter which enters into every transaction of which money forms a part. There is no contract, public or private,—no engagement, national or individual,—which is unaffected by it. The enterprises of commerce, the profits of trade, the arrangements made in all the domestic relations of society, the wages of labour, pecuniary transactions of the highest amount and of the lowest, the payment of the national debt, the provision for the national expenditure, the command which the coin of the smallest denomination has over all the necessaries of life, are all affected by the decision to which we may come on that great question which I am about to submit to the consideration of the House.' After this exordium, and con-

trary to his usual custom, I may even say, contrary to the general custom of the English Parliament, he did not pause to point out the circumstances which rendered his measures necessary: taking their necessity to be granted and admitted by all, he entered at once into a masterly exposition of the general principles of the subject; and after having discussed at length the various systems of financial writers, he went on to say, 'I have now stated—with respect to the measure of value, with respect to the coinage and currency, and with respect to promissory notes payable on demand—the broad and general principles which I think ought to regulate these three great elements of our monetary system. I have now to state the extent to which I propose to carry out these principles. If I do not carry them out immediately to their full and entire extent, I may be told, as I have been told before, that very good principles have been laid down in the abstract, but that practically I shrink from their application. Nevertheless, the opinion which I have formerly expressed I still entertain—that it is of great importance that public men should acknowledge the great principles by which important measures should be regulated; and in discussing a question of such magnitude as the present, I had rather it were said, "you fall short in the application of sound and admitted principles," than that "you have concealed or perverted those principles for the purpose of justifying your limited application of them." . . . . . All I can promise is, that I will propose no practical measure which is inconsistent with the

principles that I have laid down, and which does not tend to their ultimate establishment. It is, however, most important that those who are responsible for the management of the affairs of a great country like this—seeing how easy it is, by unwise legislation, to create panic or introduce confusion into the monetary transactions of the country—it is most important that they should deal considerately with private interests; first, because justice requires it; and secondly, because there is danger that the cause of progressive amendment will be injured if you cannot reconcile reform with a due regard to the welfare and happiness of individuals.'

Sir Robert formed too high an estimate, on this occasion, of the difficulties of his undertaking: the inconvenience of an incomplete or defective constitution of banks, and the absence of well-defined guarantees for the issue and payment of their notes, and for their relations with the State and the public, had for some years been strongly felt; the violent conflict which had arisen in the United States of America, in reference to the Central Bank of the Union, the disorders which had ensued, after its suppression, in a number of local banks, the public and individual sufferings which had resulted—all these circumstances had furnished food for the meditations of financiers, and had thrown great light on all parts of the question. The fundamental principles of a good monetary system were generally understood and admitted. True in theory and useful in practice, the propositions of Sir Robert Peel for completing or reforming in

certain respects the organization of the Bank of England, met with opposition only from some personal interests with which they interfered, and from some obstinate or chimerical minds whose routine notions they offended, or whose fantastic dreams they did not satisfy. The Whig leaders gave them their entire support. In the House of Commons the amendments which were proposed upon them obtained scarcely eighteen votes. In the House of Lords they were adopted almost without discussion; and in 1844 Sir Robert Peel had the satisfaction of accomplishing, in reference to the monetary system of his country, the work which he had begun in 1819, against the opinion of his father, and in opposition to the first votes he had himself given, shortly after his entrance into Parliament. He keenly enjoyed this success; and delighted to speak of his Bank Act as one of the most important achievements of his public life. Perhaps because it was one of those in which he most fully succeeded in attaining the object which was ever present to his mind—the union of scientific truth with practical efficiency.

On the second of the questions which he raised himself when he might have passed it over altogether, he was far from meeting with the same unanimity; on the contrary, it became the occasion of an ardent conflict, and the first manifestation of the schism, between himself and his party. If he had limited himself to demanding for the Catholic College of Maynooth, the nine thousand pounds which Parliament had annually voted for so many years, he would

probably have obtained the grant without effort and without clamour; but the condition of Ireland, and his own relations to that unhappy country, daily engrossed more and more of his attention; he was anxious to pursue the work of Catholic emancipation, and to make a fresh advance towards the Catholics which should inspire them with confidence in himself and hope in the future. The opportunity seemed favourable for such a step. Found guilty by his jury on the 12th of February, 1844, Mr. O'Connell, by reason of a virtuous scruple of legal form, had been acquitted by the House of Lords on the 4th of September following, without any remonstrance on the part of the Cabinet, and indeed, on the insistance of one of the ministers, Lord Wharncliffe. Surprised and delighted at this unexpected deliverance, O'Connell, though he still continued his noisy declamations against the Cabinet, and in favour of the Repeal of the Union, was in his heart less violent, and by no means eager to push the struggle to extremes; around him, however, and in reality against him, a new party had sprung up, the Young Ireland party, who distrusted the secret moderation of the veteran leader, reproached him with his mania for legality, accused him of evading every decisive act, and laboured to supplant him in his popularity and power. In the midst of these hesitations and dissensions among the Irish popular leaders, it appeared to Peel that a great act of kindness towards Ireland had a chance of being well received in that country; and on the 3rd of April, 1845, he stated in the House of Commons—

'In the course of the last session of Parliament, I took the opportunity of publicly declaring on the part of Her Majesty's Government, that it was our intention, during the recess, to apply ourselves to the consideration of the state of academical education in Ireland. I accompanied that declaration with a distinct intimation that the circumstances and position of the Roman Catholic College of Maynooth should be included in that consideration. I added that, in undertaking the consideration of the state of Maynooth, it was our intention to undertake it in a spirit friendly and not adverse to the institution; and I made that public declaration at that time in order that due notice should be given of the intentions of Her Majesty's Government. I was not unprepared for the demonstration of opinion which has been made this day by the presentation of petitions. I could not look back to the discussions which have taken place in this House with respect to Maynooth, without foreseeing that a proposition for the extension of Maynooth, was likely to encounter the risk of great opposition. I could not disguise from myself that it would be opposed by many persons entertaining strong religious feelings and conscientious scruples, the sincerity of which cannot be questioned, and which on that account are entitled to respectful consideration. It was because we foresaw this, having to encounter difficulties of which we were fully sensible, but by which we were not deterred, that we thought it our duty to take care that these difficulties should not be aggravated by a just allegation that we had con-

cealed our intentions, and had taken the country by surprise. It was upon this account, that, expressly and deliberately, I made the intimation to which I have referred in the course of last session, not in vague and equivocal terms, but in terms distinctly indicating that the probable result of the consideration which we were pledged to give to the position of the College of Maynooth, would be an improvement in the system, accompanied with an increase of the public grant. . . . . I now, on the part of the executive Government, submit to the deliberate judgment of the House of Commons, the proposal which we are prepared to make.'

He at once proceeded to explain and discuss the motives of his conduct with the same firm frankness as he had shown in announcing his plan, setting forth at the same time the various systems of objections which he foresaw would be raised, and battering them beforehand into ruin. 'It has appeared to us,' he said, 'that we are at liberty to pursue one or other of three courses, with respect to the institution of Maynooth. It is competent for us to continue, without alteration, the present system and the present amount of the Parliamentary grant. It is competent for us to discontinue the grant altogether, to repudiate all connexion with Maynooth, and after providing perhaps for the protection of existing interests, publicly to notify that there shall hereafter be no connexion between Government and the College of Maynooth. That is the second course which it is possible to pursue. The third course is to adopt in a

friendly and generous spirit the institution provided for the education of the Roman Catholic priesthood—to extend the Parliamentary provision for that purpose, and to attempt, not by interference with the doctrine or discipline of the Roman Catholic Church, but by a more liberal provision, to improve the system of education, and to elevate the tone and character of that institution.

'Any one of these three courses is open to us. With respect to the first—the continuance, without alteration or modification of any kind, of the present grant and the present system—it is our deliberate conviction that, of all courses that can be pursued, that would be the most pregnant with mischief. We profess to endow a national institution; we profess to make provision for the education of those who are to give spiritual instruction and religious consolation to many millions of the people of Ireland. We just give enough, by voting 9,000*l.* a year, to discourage and paralyze voluntary contributions for that purpose. Remove the grant altogether, and you will find on the part of the people of Ireland, I have no doubt, a disposition to make the pecuniary sacrifice, and to provide some, perhaps an imperfect, endowment, by voluntary contributions, for the education of their priesthood. . . . If it be a violation of principle to provide instruction for the Roman Catholic priesthood, we are guilty of that violation of principle now. A grant of 9,000*l.* a year, professedly for the education of the Roman Catholic priesthood, is a violation of principle at least as great as any which I shall

propose to the House. But it is not merely that you make an annual grant to Maynooth; that is not the limit of your connexion with the institution. There are upon the statute-book three Acts of Parliament, two passed by the Irish Legislature before the Union, and one passed in the year 1808, adopting and sanctioning this institution, for the support of which the annual grant is made. . . . Will it be wise—will it be just, to say to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, "We are bound, it is true, by an inconvenient obligation contracted by our predecessors, and that obligation we will respect; in a surly spirit we will continue to give you the usual grant of 9,000*l.* a year; but there shall be no improvement in your buildings—there shall be no advance in the salaries of your professors—the Act of Parliament shall continue unrepealed and unaltered—our implied sanction and encouragement, so far as statute law is concerned, shall remain; and though we do not withhold the annual grant, we continue it with the feeling that our conscience is violated, and we give it you only because we have to fulfil an odious contract into which others entered, and from which we cannot escape." Any course is preferable to this.

'Shall we avow that our conscientious scruples are so violated in the maintenance of this system that we will discontinue altogether the connexion with Maynooth, and throw the burden of educating the priesthood upon the people of Ireland? I am aware that there are some who think that a desirable course . . . and apart from the obligation of good faith—apart

from all consideration of the mortified and irritated feelings which might arise from such an avowal on your part—I do not hesitate to say that I believe the absolute discontinuance of the vote would be better for all purposes than the continuance of the niggardly allowance you now grant. But I think I can assign reasons, which, if as statesmen and legislators you take into account, public feelings and considerations of public policy will dissuade you from taking that course, and from repudiating all connexion with this institution. When did your connexion with it arise? Under whose authority? How long has it been continued? For fifty years you have consented to continue the parliamentary vote for Maynooth. You commenced your connexion with it in the year 1795. The reigning sovereign was George III.; the Minister of England was Mr. Pitt. In the year 1795, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Lord Fitzwilliam, called the attention of the Irish Parliament to the state of education in that country. That was a critical period, the year 1795. In a speech made to the Irish Parliament, at the opening of the session of that year, the Lord Lieutenant addressed them thus:—"We are engaged in an arduous contest; the time calls not only for great fortitude, and an unusual share of public spirit, but for much constancy and perseverance. We are engaged with a power which threatens nothing less than the entire subversion of the liberty and independence of every State in Europe; an enemy to them all, it is actuated with a peculiar animosity against these kingdoms, not only as the natural pro-

tector of the balance of power in Europe, but also because, by the possession of a legal, humane, and rational freedom, we seem to reproach that false and spurious liberty, which, in reality, is an ignominious servitude, tending to extinguish all good acts, to generate nothing but impiety, crime, disorder, and ferocious manners, and to end in wretchedness and general desolation." In the same speech made at that eventful epoch, the Lord Lieutenant said:—"Attached as you are to the general cause of religion, learning, and civilization, I have to recommend to your consideration the state of education in this kingdom; and I hope that your wisdom will order everything relating to it in the manner most beneficial, and best adapted to the occasions of his Majesty's faithful subjects in this land." . . . . Lord Fitzwilliam was succeeded by Lord Camden; and Lord Camden, as Lord Lieutenant, laid the first stone of the College of Maynooth. At the close of the session, the Noble Lord, addressing the Parliament, thanked them for their liberality, and congratulated them on their wisdom in founding a plan of domestic education for the Roman Catholic clergy. . . . . Now I ask you, whether you are prepared to declare to the Roman Catholic body, "During this half century we have been in error, we have been violating a conscientious scruple which we must now observe; and we give notice to the Roman Catholics of Ireland that this connexion, after continuing for half a century, must now be abolished?" Recollect that when it was formed the Roman Catholics were labouring under disabilities

that excluded them from office and from Parliament, and that those disabilities did not constitute, in the view of the Irish Parliament, an objection to originating this grant. These disabilities have been now entirely removed; the Irish Roman Catholics stand upon the same footing as ourselves in respect to civil privileges; shall we now turn to them, and tell them, in a harsh and unfriendly tone, "We cannot act towards you in the spirit in which the Parliament of your own country acted? True, the Parliament which favoured you was a Parliament exclusively Protestant; the scruples of conscience that Parliament did not feel, we feel; and the connexion with your religious education which, in the hour of peril, they established, we must repudiate and dissolve." Sir, I should deprecate such a step. It is not the amount of the pecuniary grant; what I deprecate is the animus it would indicate. We should never be able to convince those from whom the grant was withheld, that those scruples which were not felt by George III., by Mr. Pitt, by the exclusively Protestant Legislature of their own country, are now felt to such a degree by us, that we must abandon the connexion which was thus formed. Sir, I should deeply regret, not merely on account of the Roman Catholics, but on account of the general interests of the community, if we did feel ourselves under the obligation of making the declaration that we, who dissent from the doctrines of the Romish Church—that we, who hold a faith which we consider more pure, and to which we are devoted—that we, on account of our devotion to that faith, are

prevented from advancing any assistance for the propagation of doctrines from which we dissent. If we make that declaration, what a lesson shall we inculcate upon the landlords of Ireland! Take the case of a Protestant landlord, perhaps an absentee, who has an estate from which he derives a large income; that estate is cultivated by Roman Catholic labourers, and occupied by Roman Catholic tenants. Must I tell him, on the authority of Parliament, that he will violate his duty towards his God, if seeing dependents professing a faith from which he dissents in need of religious instruction—in need of religious consolation —in want of the means of joining in the public worship of their Creator—he should assign some portion of the wealth derived from this estate to provide that instruction and that consolation in the only mode in which they can be available? . . . . Can I, then, come to the conclusion that we are to refuse this grant upon the ground that it would be a violation of principle to agree to it? If that conclusion be not justifiable, I have disposed of two of the courses which it is competent for us to pursue—the entire repudiation of any grant to Maynooth, or the continuance of the present grant and the present law unaltered. There remains but one other course, and that is the course which we are prepared to take. We are prepared, in a liberal and confiding spirit, to improve the institution, and to elevate the character of the education which it supplies . . . . We feel that we can propose this, and can ask your assent to this, without any violation of conscientious scruples. We believe

that it is perfectly compatible to hold stedfast the profession of our own faith without wavering, and at the same time to improve the education and to elevate the character of those who—do what you will—pass this measure or refuse it—will continue to be the spiritual guides and religious instructors of millions of your fellow-countrymen.'

Language so frank, giving so clear a statement of the question, enlarged at the same time that it simplified the debate. It began at once, and was in turn sorrowful or violent, serious or ironical, according as one or another of Peel's opponents rose to speak. He had opponents of the most different character; zealous and uncompromising Protestants, who felt their consciences wounded, their passions irritated, or their traditions offended, by his proposal; systematic Radicals, who wished that the State should not interfere in any way in religious matters; political rivals, both Tories and Whigs—the former anxious to win for themselves a name and power among their party at the expense of the leader who, they said, oppressed and betrayed them—the latter approving the measure, but claiming the merit and honour of it for their principles and themselves. All rushed eagerly into the conflict, from duty, from blindness, from rage, or from ambition—some to defend their cause which was in danger, others to serve their party by decrying their most formidable adversary at the very moment that they lent him their support.

The ultra-Protestants, who were the most numerous as well as the most earnest of his opponents, did not

display as much talent as ardour in the debate. The more sensible among them, Sir Robert Inglis, for instance, separated from Peel with regret, did full justice to his intentions and services, and while maintaining the exclusive domination of Protestantism, were desirous to act with Christian charity towards the Catholics. The more vehement, however, fell into such excesses of personal animosity, or advocated such antiquated prejudices, or manifested such absurd apprehensions, that they made their sincerity and their cause alike ridiculous. Mr. Plumptre reproached Lord John Manners for having said that he did not consider the religion of the Church of Rome to be that of Antichrist. 'Nothing can be further from my wish,' he observed, 'than to give pain to any individual; and if I do so on this occasion, I hope it will be considered that I do so only in discharge of a paramount duty. I do not mean to say that the religion of Rome is exclusively that of Antichrist, but I believe that it is so completely and prominently: and I am further of opinion that it is a fearful and national sin to endow, as you now propose to endow, such a religion.' 'Really,' said Colonel Sibthorp, 'if I had not seen the First Lord of the Treasury take the oaths at the table of this House, I should have doubted whether he were a Protestant, a Roman Catholic, or a Mahometan; nor should I be surprised if the time should yet come when we shall see him sitting cross-legged as a Mahometan, or embracing the Pope. I must say that I have lost all confidence in that man. . . An honourable and learned member has said, that I would

sooner sacrifice my principles than be shaved. I tell that honourable and learned gentleman that I had rather not only be shaved, but have my head shaved off, than forget I am a Protestant—born a Protestant, bred a Protestant, educated a Pretestant—and God grant that I may die with similar feelings, and in that faith!' 'I solemnly believe,' said Mr. Ferrand, 'that if her Majesty's present Government can induce her Majesty to attach her signature to this bill, she will sign away her title to the British Crown.'

The Radicals felt no such anger. If a rigid adherence to their principle, that the Church and the State ought to be absolutely separated, prevented them from supporting the measure, the more enlightened among them approved it in their hearts, and were grateful to Peel for his courage in proposing it. Mr. Roebuck and Mr. Cobden did not hesitate to vote for it, after explaining the reasons which induced them, on this occasion, to depart from their principle. Mr. Bright, in voting against it, felt himself obliged in his turn to explain why he had remained faithful to his principle, as he was unwilling either to injure Sir Robert Peel, or to allow himself to be confounded with his enemies.

Among the Tories, Mr. Disraeli had already for some time placed himself at the head of the malecontents, urging them to an open rupture, and indulging himself in the most bitter hostility. With a brilliant and fertile intellect, and justly ambitious, but with all the acerbity and restlessness of a man who is seeking his proper rank, and finds it difficult to attain it, he

could not let slip so favourable an opportunity of dealing a heavy blow at his enemy. Laying aside the question of Maynooth itself, he attacked Sir Robert Peel in the name of the principles of constitutional government; he appealed to the necessity for the existence of great political parties, in order to give strength and dignity to the administration; and to the necessity of fidelity to principles in order to give strength and dignity to parties. 'If you are to have a popular government,' he said, 'if you are to have a parliamentary administration, the conditions antecedent are that you should have a government which declares the principles upon which its policy is founded, and then you can have on them the wholesome check of a constitutional opposition. What have we got instead? We have a great Parliamentary "middleman;" a man who bamboozles one party and plunders the other, till, having obtained a position to which he is not entitled, he cries out, "Let us have no party questions, but fixity of tenure."' Few Tories, even among those who were most discontented, would have used such insulting language in reference to the most illustrious of them all; but many took pleasure in listening to it.

Among all Peel's opponents, the conduct and position of the Whigs was the best. In voting for the measure proposed by their adversary, they gave proof of disinterested fidelity to their principles, and they were able at the same time, without impropriety, to point out the strong contrast between their constancy and his mutability. Lord John Russell did not allow

himself this facile pleasure; he supported the grant to Maynooth without permitting himself to be led into any direct or indirect sarcasm on Sir Robert Peel. Mr. Macaulay was more complaisant to himself. After having with great eloquence defended Maynooth against all attacks: 'We must distinguish,' he said, 'between the measure and its authors. The measure we are bound, on account of its intrinsic merits, to support; while with regard to its authors, it may be our duty to speak of their conduct in terms of censure. In such terms of censure I feel it my duty to speak of the conduct of Her Majesty's present advisers. . . . . It is impossible for me not to say that it has been too much the habit of the right honourable baronet at the head of the Government, to make use, when in opposition, of passions with which he has not the slightest sympathy, and prejudices which he regards with profound contempt. As soon as he reaches power, a change, a salutary change for the country, takes place. The instruments are flung aside—the ladder by which he climbed is kicked down. This is not a solitary instance; and I am forced to say that this sort of conduct is pursued by the right honourable baronet on something like a system. . . These are my opinions respecting the conduct of the ministry: but am I therefore to take the counsel of the honourable member for Shrewsbury (Mr. Disraeli), and vote against this bill? Not so. I believe the fate of the bill and the fate of the ministry to be in our hands; but I believe the spectacle of inconsistency which is exhibited on the ministerial bench will do mischief

enough. That mischief will be infinitely increased if an answering display of inconsistency be made on this side of the House. It seems to me that then we should have nothing before us but one vast shipwreck of all the public character in the kingdom. And therefore it is that—though at the cost of sacrifices which it is not agreeable to any man to make, and restraining many feelings that I own stir strongly within me,—I have determined to give this bill through all its stages my most steady support.'

Outside the walls of Parliament, in various parts of the country, the attacks made both on the measure and on Peel himself, in petitions, meetings, and newspapers, were still more violent. Petitions poured in by thousands, subscribed by upwards of a million signatures. 'It is high treason against heaven,' they said, 'to apply the revenues of a Protestant people to the education of a Catholic clergy.—It would be as justifiable to establish a college for the propagation of theft and adultery.—He who consents to the Maynooth grant, worships the beast, blasphemes against God, is at war with the saints, and crucifies the Lord afresh.' 'The prime minister,' said the newspapers, 'has as much sympathy and respect for his fellow-countrymen as the huntsman for the hare, the fisherman for the trout, or the butcher for the oxen that he slaughters.—Peel is a novelty; he has invented the art of government by deception.—He is the Maroto[1]

[1] Don Rafael Maroto, a Spanish Carlist general, who in August, 1839, deserted the cause of Don Carlos in the Basque Provinces, treated with General Espartero at Vengara, and thus forced Don Carlos to take refuge in France.

of the Conservative party.—The debate has stripped him of his last rags; public decency requires that he should henceforth conceal himself.' It was chiefly from the Dissenting sects that these fanatical outbursts proceeded, under forms sometimes cynical enough. The Anglican Church generally manifested less harshness towards the Catholics, and greater respect towards the Government. In the House of Lords, one archbishop and five bishops voted for the bill; and the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Whately, defended it with an eloquence at once cogent and expansive, lofty and familiar; but this episcopal moderation, these Parliamentary successes, did not avail to calm the Protestant and popular passions and apprehensions which were arrayed against the measure. 'I must frankly avow my belief,' said Mr. Gladstone, who spoke in support of the grant, 'that the minority who voted against the introduction of this bill, represented the general and prevailing sentiment of the great majority of the people of England and Scotland.'

In the midst of this storm, and during the six days occupied by the debate on the second reading of the bill, Sir Robert Peel remained silent, delegating to his colleagues and friends, Sir James Graham, Mr. Goulburn, Mr. Gladstone, Lord Lincoln, Mr. Sidney Herbert, the duty of defending his proposition and himself against the assaults that were daily made upon them. On the sixth day, just before the House divided, he spoke: 'The course of this debate,' he said, 'has exhibited many honourable examples of

men determined at any hazard to express their conscientious feelings upon this question. Many who approve generally of the policy and conduct of Her Majesty's Government, yet, conscientiously differing from them upon the proposal which they have made on the present occasion, have permitted no political or party consideration to interfere with the honest expression of their opinion, whatever may be the consequence. I assure those honourable members that, however deeply I regret the difference that has arisen between us, I honour them for the course they have pursued. On the other side of the House, we have the same honourable exhibitions of men prepared to encounter any risk, to brave any disapprobation on the part of their constituents, to relinquish, perhaps for ever, their political station, because they believed this measure to be politic and just; and they have resolved to act on their own sense of public duty, rather than on the feelings which they know to be entertained by their constituents. I say the debate has been equally honourable to the opponents and to the supporters of this measure. I abstain from any minute reference to the line of argument that has been adduced in this debate. Whatever feelings may have been occasionally excited in my mind in the course of it, they are overpowered by, and are merged in, one feeling of deep and earnest hope that you will not become parties to the rejection of this measure. You may think, and perhaps not unjustly, that it would have been better if this measure had proceeded from the constant and strenuous friends of

the Roman Catholics. You may think it right that those who have proposed such a measure should forfeit your patronage. Act upon that principle—inflict that penalty—withdraw from us your confidence—punish the men—but do not disregard the consequences of rejecting this measure. My honourable and respected friend, the representative of the University of Oxford (Sir R. H. Inglis), has told us that we have forfeited the confidence not only of a great party in this House, but of a still more powerful party in the country. He says we have destroyed that element of power which constitutes the ability to carry on the public business. I have been told in the course of the night, that, even if I were to appeal to my own constituents, limited as is their number, and strong as is supposed to be the personal confidence which they repose in me, and which I have in them, I should forfeit my seat in Parliament. Well, be it so. Suppose that to be a correct representation of the real state of affairs, do you believe that we would have incurred the hazard, do you think that we should have run the risk, of forfeiting the confidence of the great party by whom we have been supported, and of the great body of the people out of doors—that we would have endangered our own existence as a Government, and our seats as members of Parliament —but for a strong sense of our public duty? As the author of this measure, and as the organ of the Government, I feel bound to explain—I am afraid, after the length at which I troubled the House on a former evening, I should rather say, to recapitulate—the

motives of the Government in bringing forward this measure, the object intended by it, the ulterior objects which we contemplate, and the effects upon the state of Ireland, and its relations to this country, which we think the adoption of this measure may produce.'

He then proceeded to review, not indeed the whole debate, but the question itself under its great political aspect, as regarded its motives and its probable effects in promoting the pacification of Ireland, and the difficult progress of real union between the two religions and the two races. When he had concluded this review, he went on to say: 'I do not pretend to say that this measure will produce permanent satisfaction. I do not guarantee the vote for Maynooth as a final and complete measure, . . . but I do think it will produce a kindly feeling in Ireland. It has produced that effect; it has been received with a grateful feeling, and with a spirit corresponding to that in which it was proposed. . . . I do not regret the course I have taken. . . . I might have been tempted, at an earlier period in the debate; to refer to a speech of a right honourable gentleman (Mr. Macaulay), but the taunts and imputations in which he indulged against the Government, I will forbear from noticing. . . . . With me, every feeling as to the imputation of inconsistency, every feeling with regard to the suspicions thrown upon the sincerity of the Government, every other feeling is subordinate to one, my desire that you should not reject this measure. . . . I say without the least hesitation, you must break up

in some way or other that formidable confederacy which exists in Ireland against the British Government and the British connexion. I do not believe you can break it up by force. You can do much to break it up by acting in a spirit of kindness, forbearance, and generosity. . . . As I said before, punish us; visit us with censure; let the two parties combine against us on the ground that the policy we are adopting ought to be carried out by its original promoters; take what other course you please, but let not your indignation fall on the measure; let it be confined to those who proposed it.'

He might safely call down upon himself all the anger of the House; he had gained his cause; the second reading of the bill was carried by a majority of 147 votes. The debate was resumed on the various clauses and the amendments thereto, and on the third reading of the amended bill, it lasted for another week; Sir Robert Peel spoke several times, once, indeed, in reply to Mr. Macaulay, with a haughty asperity that was not altogether free from rancour. In the House of Lords the debate was kept up for three days; the Duke of Wellington exerted his cold and concise authority in favour of Maynooth College, but without exciting any irritation against himself. No one complained of him; Sir Robert alone was made responsible for the measure, and justly, for he had not merely proposed it, and obtained its acceptance by his colleagues, but he had conceived it, and resolved upon it, without the stimulus of any urgent necessity of government, or any pressure of public opinion; it

was, on his part, a free and spontaneous act of just and prudent policy, accomplished against the wish of his own party, and in spite of pressure from without; a rare example in an age when voluntary boldness seems to be the attribute only of perverse or chimerical minds! Sir Robert Peel formed an exaggerated estimate of the importance and salutary effects of his act; the Irish Catholic clergy were neither very grateful, nor were they rapidly and notably improved; but it was a step onwards in that path of justice and wise progress, in which the prospect is immense and advance extremely slow. To Sir Robert Peel belonged the honour as well as the burden of the step, as the virtue of taking it was also his.

The battle of Maynooth was no sooner gained, than the Cabinet entered into another conflict, also for the sake of Ireland, and on an analogous subject. Sir James Graham proposed to found at Cork, Galway, and Belfast, three purely secular colleges, in which the State should provide instruction in literature and science, without joining therewith any religious teaching, but leaving this branch of education to the unshackled efforts of the various religious denominations. This was raising a great and complex question—the question whether the separation of civil and religious life, though possible in the State and among men of mature age, is equally so in establishments of public education, among children and adolescents. It was, moreover, acting in virtue of a principle which seemed but little in harmony with the conduct of the Government in the affair of Maynooth. At Maynooth the

State stepped in to assist in the education of Catholic priests, and in the new colleges it refused to do anything for any religious education at all. The debate was long, and the confusion extreme, in ideas as well as in parties; the Catholics and the zealous Protestants, Mr. O'Connell and Sir Robert Inglis, combined to oppose the bill. Sir Robert Peel spoke on several occasions, steadily maintaining the principle of purely secular education, but doing so with some perplexity, and rather treating it as a necessity imposed by the religious dissensions of Ireland than as a measure good in itself. After having gone through the ordeal of a number of amendments, some of which were adopted, the bill at length passed both Houses; but it was the commencement of a struggle, not the foundation of an institution. Instead of ceasing when the bill was carried, the resistance of the various opposing parties, both Catholic and Protestant, Irish and English, went on increasing in virulence, and became still further complicated by the intervention of the Pope in the resolutions of the Irish bishops with regard to the conduct they intended to pursue towards the new establishments. Sir Robert Peel had not measured the greatness of the problem which he had approached.

CHAPTER XIII.

Numerous Grievances redressed.—Labour in the Factories.—Sir Robert Peel threatens to resign.—The Sugar Dutics.—Sir Robert Peel again threatens to resign.—Ironical speech of Mr. Disraeli.—Strange silence of Sir Robert Peel.—Ferment in the Conservative party.—Prosperous state of the Finances.—Abolitions and reductions in the Customs' Duties.—Speech of Sir Robert Peel.—Criticism of the press.—Why the Income-Tax was continued.

He brought to a more successful termination, during the course of these two sessions, several questions which had long been pressing on the English Government, as grievances to be redressed or progresses to be accomplished. He abrogated the unjust law which vested in exclusively Protestant commissioners the right of authorizing or prohibiting the gifts or legacies that might be made to the various Catholic institutions; they were superseded by a mixed commission, on which an equal number of Catholics were appointed. The Protestant Dissenters, and among others the Unitarians, were disturbed in the possession of their chapels and other property, by the raising of obscure questions as to the religious intentions of the founders, as compared with the doctrines of the occupants; and these disputes were envenomed and prolonged immode-

rately by legal subtleties and theological animosities. In spite of strenuous opposition, Sir Robert Peel and Lord Chancellor Lyndhurst put an end to these questions by passing an Act which confirmed in the full possession of establishments of this nature any religious society which had been in possession of them for twenty years. The validity of the marriages of the Presbyterians, who had settled in great numbers in the north of Ireland, was a matter of considerable doubtfulness; but this was entirely removed by a bill, frankly accepted by the Episcopal Church of Ireland. The Poor-Law received important and difficult ameliorations. The obligation to take a Christian oath excluded the Jews from certain municipal offices—it was abolished. The Cabinet did not succeed so well with its measures for the reform of the Ecclesiastical Courts, and of the municipal system in Ireland: on these two questions, it was obliged to drop the bills which it had presented. Placed between the systematic adversaries and the systematic partizans of all innovations, when it was unable to adduce, in support of those which it proposed, either an imperious necessity or that superabundant evidence in presence of which prejudices and passions are sometimes silent, it ran great risk of failing, either through having attempted too much or not done enough. But these reverses did not discourage Sir Robert Peel; it was one of the characteristics of his mind that he had a taste for small affairs as well as for great, and took almost as much pleasure in the laborious accomplishment of a modest administrative measure as in the

glorious efforts of a great political act. Two of the members of his Cabinet, Lord Lyndhurst and Sir James Graham, were very effective auxiliaries to him, and it was more especially with their assistance that he was able to introduce, both in the laws and in the administration of the country, a multitude of reforms which will have no place in history, but of which English society daily reaps the advantage.

Among those which he brought before Parliament, there was one in which he naturally felt a particular interest; this was the bill proposed by Sir James Graham for modifying the laws already in force with regard to the labour and education of children employed in factories. These laws had been originated by Sir Robert Peel's father. On the 6th of June, 1815, that old manufacturer, who had spent his life amidst his workpeople, making his fortune by their labour, called the attention of the House of Commons to the lamentable and culpable abuse which was made, in most manufactories, of the labour of children, as well as to their sufferings, and their physical and moral degradation; and he demanded that the law should remedy this evil. He did not ask very much; he proposed that the labour of children should be limited to ten hours a day, and that they should be allowed two hours and a half for taking their meals and attending school. The proposition was well received, and gave rise to an inquiry; but in his zeal for humanity, the author of the reform compromised it by demanding that the law should also limit the hours of labour for adults. Most of the manufac-

turers, the political economists, and the prudent Liberals opposed this; claiming the rights of free labour and free competition for men who were old enough to defend themselves by using their freedom of action. In the discussions to which this question gave rise, young Peel, who had just entered the House of Commons, came to the assistance of his father; and in 1819 a bill was passed which regulated the conditions of age and labour in manufactories, as regarded children only. Since the year 1819 this enactment had been the object of various inquiries, and of successive modifications, in which the spirit of humane reform had uniformly prevailed. However, neither Parliament nor the public were as yet satisfied, and the question still occupied their attention. On the 7th of March, 1843, and the 6th of February, 1844, Sir James Graham proposed numerous changes in the existing system, the principal of which were the reduction of the number of hours of labour to six and a half for children of from nine to thirteen years of age, the limitation to twelve hours a day of the labour of young persons of either sex who were from thirteen to eighteen years old, the prohibition of women from labouring under any circumstances for more than twelve hours a day, and certain precautions for securing the effectual education of young workpeople. The proposition was received with general favour; but, as it happened in the case of old Sir Robert Peel, the zeal of some of the reformers was so greatly kindled in the course of the debate, that it carried them away. Lord Ashley demanded that the number of hours of

labour should be limited to ten a day for all adults, without distinction, whether men or women; and his proposition was not the most extreme, for Mr. Fielden wished to reduce the number to eight hours. 'The day,' he said, 'is divided by philosophers into three periods—eight hours for labour, eight hours for recreation, and eight hours for sleep; and I would have us carry out by our laws that division of the day.' In the name of the rights of personal liberty, and of the interests of the national commerce, Sir Robert Peel categorically opposed these propositions; he proved that the various manufactures of cotton, wool, flax, and silk, to which they would apply, formed five-sixths of the total exports of English industry,[1] and that the reduction of the hours of labour from twelve to ten a day would deprive the manufacturer of seven weeks of labour in the year. This, he said, was more than foreign competition would permit, or than humanity required. Notwithstanding this powerful argument, the House adopted an amendment proposed by Lord Ashley, which resulted indirectly in reducing the hours of labour to ten a day, for all adults without distinction, and four days afterwards, both propositions—that of the Government, which maintained the number at twelve hours, according to the usage in manufactories, and that of Lord Ashley, which limited it to ten hours—were alike rejected. Great confusion had prevailed among parties, and in the votes on this question, either from ill-humour against the Cabinet,

[1] According to the statistics of the year 1843, these exports represented 35,000,000*l.* out of 44,000,000*l.*

or with a view to court popularity, more than eighty Tories had voted with the Opposition. Not only was the bill lost, but Sir Robert Peel's authority was compromised. He resolved not to suffer such a check. About two months afterwards a new bill was brought forward, differing in some respects from the former one, but maintaining the number of hours of labour at twelve a day; and when the division drew near, after having recapitulated all the reasons which he had already given against Lord Ashley's amendment, Sir Robert Peel ended his speech with these words:—'Our duty is to take a comprehensive view of all the great interests, commercial, political, social, and moral, of all classes of this great empire. And we shall discharge the duty assigned to us . . . . . I protest against the doctrine that we are to concede because it is the popular will. If we are satisfied that it is not for the popular interest, then it is our painful but necessary duty to resist. If this House be of a different opinion—if you are satisfied that you must make this great experiment on labour—or if you think concession is inevitable, and that you must give way to the wishes and feelings of the people—be it so! But if you take that course, and if you resolve (as you cannot but do in consistency) to pursue it, you must—I say it with all respect—you must do so under other auspices, and under guides who can trace a clearer and a better way than can the present administration.'

This was using his right with a somewhat ungentle haughtiness, and without any consideration for per-

sonal feelings; but the dissident Tories were not in a position, nor were they perhaps as yet inclined, to carry their ill-temper as far as an open rupture. In vain did Lord John Russell endeavour to encourage them to do so, by blaming Sir Robert Peel for his supercilious requirements; the House was much more numerously attended than it had been on the previous divisions; the amendment which limited the number of hours of labour to ten a day was rejected by a majority of 138 votes, and the bill was passed as proposed by the Cabinet.

A month after this division, Sir Robert Peel put the fidelity, I will not say the docility, of his party a second time to the same test. On the proposition of a Conservative member, and in spite of the resistance of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the House, on the 14th of June, 1844, in the debate on the Sugar Duties, had adopted an amendment which reduced to four shillings less than the Government desired the duty imposed on sugars from the English colonies, and in certain cases, on foreign sugars. Sir Robert Peel, who was not present when this occurred, reverted to the question three days afterwards, treated it in all its aspects as connected with the general system of the public finances, referred to the opinions which he had professed on the subject, whether as a member of the Opposition or as a member of the Government, won the favour of the persevering opponents of slavery by maintaining an inequality of duties between sugars which were the product of free labour and those grown in slave States, and then,

passing abruptly from this special question to the general position of the Government: 'I do not hesitate to admit,' he said, 'that, differing as we do from my honourable friend on the merits of his proposition, there are also political grounds which make it impossible for me, on the part of the Government, to undertake the responsibility of supporting him. The measure was carried by a combination of those who generally support us with those who are our political opponents. If it be an unimportant measure, in proportion to its unimportance is it significant of a want of confidence in our administration. If you can effect a great public object, that is a reason for proposing an alteration in the plan of the Government; but if you cannot effect any important object—if there be no great difference in the value of the two propositions—then I say the concurrence between our political opponents and our political friends has a bearing on our position as the executive Government of this country. It does, in our opinion, require us to resist it by all the means in our power; and if acquiesced in by us, it would be an encouragement of similar combinations. I do not believe—I cannot believe, that the concurrence in that vote was a casual occurrence arising out of the debate. I may be wrong, but my impression is, that it was a preconcerted arrangement between some of those who oppose and some of those who support us . . . . . I am not complaining. I do not deny the right of honourable gentlemen, if they thiuk fit, to enter into such combinations. I do not condescend to deprecate such a

proceeding; but I think I have a right to consider what bearing the result has upon the position of the Government—upon my position as a Minister of the Crown . . . . I cannot help feeling that we have proposed measures, in the course both of last session and the present, in respect to which that progress has not been made which we think might have been made, and which not having been made, leaves us certainly in no enviable position. We cannot also conceal from ourselves that some of our measures have not received that cordial assent and agreement which we could have desired from those for whose character and opinions we entertain the highest and sincerest respect. . . . . We have thought it desirable to relax the system of commercial protection, and admit into competition with articles of the domestic produce of this country, articles from foreign lands. We have attempted to counsel the enforcement of principles which we believe to be founded in truth, with every regard for existing institutions, and every precaution to prevent embarrassment and undue alarm . . . . . If we have forfeited the confidence of those who have given us so truly and honourably their support, I shall deeply regret it. But I cannot ask for it by encouraging expectations which we are not prepared to realize—by holding out expectations that we shall take a middle or another course with regard to those measures which we believe to be best for the interests of the country. We think the course we have taken the right one. We cannot profess any repentance. We cannot declare our conversion to a different prin-

ciple. We are prepared to abide by the engagements we have made. I think it necessary to make this declaration at a period when important consequences may be the result of the ultimate decision of the House on this subject.'

Although less harshly expressed than it had been a month previously in the debate on the hours of labour in factories, the threat was unmistakeable, and the House was greatly moved by it. Some of the sincerest friends of the Cabinet, Lord Sandon among others, remonstrated; protesting that they had no intention of separating from him, that they still approved of his conduct, and were prepared to support him in his general policy; but claiming a little greater latitude for their personal judgment, in questions of secondary importance. The debate was prolonged for some time, and rapidly increased in vehemence. Sir Robert Peel would not yield; like him, and probably under the impulse they had received from him, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary for the Colonies, Mr. Goulburn and Lord Stanley, absolutely rejected the proposed amendment. When the division took place, there were twenty-six more members in the House than there had been on the previous occasion, and the amendment which on the 14th of June had been carried by twenty votes, was rejected on the 17th by a majority of twenty-two.

In the course of the debate, without discussing either the proposition of the Government or the amendment, without saying a word on the question before the House, Mr. Disraeli had taken Sir Robert

Peel himself to task with the most poignant irony ;—'I should mistake the right honourable baronet's character,' he said, 'if I were to suppose that he could greatly value a power which is only to be retained by means so extraordinary—I doubt whether I may not say, by means so unconstitutional. I think he should deign to consult a little more the feelings of his supporters. I do not think he ought to drag them unreasonably through the mire. He has already once this session made them repeal a solemn decision at which they had arrived, and now he comes down again and says, "Unless you rescind another important resolution, I will no longer take upon myself the responsibility of conducting affairs." Now I really think to rescind one vote during the session is enough. I don't think in reason we ought to be called on to endure this degradation more than once a year. . . The right honourable baronet has joined in the anti-slavery cry ; but it seems that his horror of slavery extends to every place except the benches behind him. There the gang is still assembled, and there the thong of the whip still sounds. . . If the whip were less heard here, the right honourable baronet's conduct would be more consistent with his professions. . . . He may be right, he may even be to a certain degree successful, in pursuing the line of conduct which he has adopted, menacing his friends, and cringing to his opponents ; but I for one am disposed to look upon it as a success neither tending to the honour of the House nor to his own credit.'

In reply to words so insulting to his friends as well

as to himself, Sir Robert Peel did not open his mouth, either to defend himself, or to defend his friends. A strange silence! Good answers were, assuredly, not wanting. Did he bend others to his yoke when he refused to bow to theirs? Was he condemned to labour in the public service, forced to act against his own convictions, and to remain at his post until it should suit the convenience of men, who did not think with him, to relieve him? And did not those among his partizans who continued to support him do so from their own choice, just as freely as those who separated from him? Was he accused of retaining them by corruption? Since when was it forbidden to subordinate a particular disagreement to a general policy, and to rescind a resolution when it was found to entail unexpected consequences? It is the custom of the Opposition to take advantage of appearances in order to travesty into servile and disgraceful proceedings, acts which have been accomplished with entire independence, and from motives of conscience or good sense; but it is also the duty of the head of a Government to defend his friends against these artifices and violences of language, to place their conduct, as well as his own, on all occasions, in its true light, and to make them respected, as much as himself, by their common adversaries. Sir Robert Peel did not sufficiently fulfil this duty; it was one of his faults to be too solitary, and to consider himself, and himself alone, too much, in the midst of his adherents. Public life, in a free State, demands greater sympathy and devotedness; a party leader owes himself not merely

to his principles and his cause, but also to his political friends, and he can keep them zealous and faithful only so long as he shows himself jealous of their honour, and ready to fight for them as well as for himself. I may add that Sir Robert Peel felt too much repugnance for the conflict when it assumed a character of bitter and insulting personality; it offended his dignity, which was more ready to take umbrage than to preserve its tranquillity; and he too often adopted the buckler of disdain, in order to cover himself from such attacks. In the arena of free governments it is necessary to use more offensive weapons, which strike the enemy more directly, and drive him back to a greater distance.

These internal dissensions, these defections of a few, these alternations of ill-humour and return on the part of many others, did not as yet bring down on Sir Robert Peel any serious reverses; all his persevering propositions were adopted, all his important measures carried without obstacle; his reputation for ability and power went on increasing: but the fermentation and disorganization also increased from day to day in the Conservative party; the difference of first opinions and final tendencies between the leader and most of his old friends daily became more clearly marked; it was everywhere, in clubs and newspapers as well as in Parliament, the subject of the most animated commentaries, and of predictions full of hope or fear. Men of prudent mind were disquieted without saying so, more violent men broke out here and there, in those isolated and hasty skirmishes which

precede the battle. At the opening of the session of 1845, Sir Robert Peel found himself in presence of an inevitable question, and one which, in whatever manner it was solved, could not but bring this state of things to a crisis. The income-tax, which had been voted for three years only in 1842, was about to expire; would it be renewed or not? What administrative principles, what social interests, would prevail in the policy of the Cabinet on this occasion? Sir Robert Peel gave no explanation.

On the 14th of February, 1845, he laid before the House of Commons a statement of the condition of the public finances, and his budget for the year 1845–1846. The facts were prosperous, the plan simple, his exposition of it lucid, precise, and dignified. For the current year, from the 5th of April, 1844, to the 5th of April, 1845, the receipts exceeded the expenditure by 5,000,000*l.* For the year following, and after making a considerable increase in the navy estimates, Sir Robert Peel promised a net surplus of 3,409,000*l.*

How did he obtain this surplus, and how did he dispose of it?

He continued the income-tax, which was calculated to produce 5,200,000*l.* for the year 1845–1846; and in the customs duties he effected abolitions and reductions which amounted altogether to 3,338,000*l.*

The alteration of the duties on four articles alone—sugar, raw cotton, coal for export, and glass,—occasioned a diminution of the revenue by 2,740,000*l.* The import duties on four hundred and thirty articles were entirely abolished, which entailed a loss of

320,000*l.* on the Exchequer. But after all these reductions, and some other alterations of inland taxes, there still would remain, at the end of the year 1845–1846, a surplus of 71,000*l.*

'I shall not enter into any statement,' said Sir Robert Peel, at the commencement of his speech, 'or make any observations connected with past party considerations. I shall make no invidious contrasts; nothing shall fall from me to-night which can prevent any gentleman from exercising, in respect to such important matters, a dispassionate judgment, uninfluenced by mere considerations of party. I know I must necessarily touch on topics that have been, and will be again, I doubt not, the subjects of fierce political contention: but I shall postpone that contention to some future period, and I shall to-night attempt, as I said before, fairly and dispassionately to lay before the House the present financial position of the country, and explain the views of Government in respect to the course of policy we propose to adopt.' He ended his speech with these words:—'I have now executed the task I proposed to myself. I have, however imperfectly, explained the views and intentions of her Majesty's Government with respect to the financial and commercial policy of the country . . . . Whatever may be the decision of the House, we have, at any rate, the consolation of knowing that we have not sought popularity by avoiding the question of continuing the property tax: we have not acted in deference to popular clamour, for we have selected taxes for reduction and abolition against which there

has been no agitation. I know it will be said that the principles I have laid down are capable of much further extension, and that, in deference to them, I ought to have made much greater reductions in import duties; but it is our object, while we establish good principles, to allow for the present state of society; and viewing the magnitude of the interests involved, the consequence to those interests of rash and hasty interference, it is our desire to realize the utmost degree of good, without disturbance or alarm to interests which cannot be disturbed or alarmed without paralyzing industry. We have taken this course after careful consideration; and our conviction is, that by the adoption of this proposal, industry and commerce will be immediately benefited, and that, indirectly, all classes of this vast community will find their welfare promoted.'

The success of the scheme was great at the moment of its exposition, and not less great in its discussion. Political parties did not abandon their opposition, nor did ingenious criticism renounce its rights. Some complained of the continuance of the income-tax; others demanded a more extensive and rapid application of the principles of commercial liberty. The newspapers, in publishing the long list of four hundred and thirty articles which were exempted from all duty, amused themselves by pointing out its curious inconsistencies or frivolous concessions. 'While our bread is taxed, arsenic is admitted duty free; so that, if we cannot have food at the natural price, we may have poison on moderate

terms . . . . Bones of cattle are liberated from duty, but the flesh upon them remains subject to the landlord's tax; foreign animals are allowed to furnish us with everything but meat; free admission is granted to their bones, their hides, their hair, their hoofs, their horns, and their tails—to everything but their flesh, which is precisely the part of which we stand most in need . . . . . Feathers, flock, and flower-roots for beds, have won the favour of the Premier, but flocks of sheep continue under the appropriate protection of the Duke of Richmond.' The distinction maintained by Sir Robert Peel between sugars produced by free labour and those grown in slave States, led to a long and animated discussion, which enabled Mr. Macaulay to make one of his most successful displays of logic, eloquence, and irony. The silence which Sir Robert Peel had observed on the Corn question was referred to and commented upon with great emphasis; but notwithstanding all these attacks, the Opposition, and indeed all the Oppositions, were evidently timid and embarrassed. Peel had both personal ascendancy and public favour on his side: even among his adversaries, the majority were secretly of his opinion, or did not venture to be of an absolutely contrary opinion; and in spite of the ill-humour and internal disorganization of his party, the various portions of his plan were adopted one after another by large majorities, as it were under the sway of an external pressure freely accepted by some and sadly submitted to by others.

Such was in fact the character of the event which

was in process of accomplishment at this moment, and of which the Parliament and even the Cabinet itself were to a far greater extent the instruments than the authors. It was not the redress of an old abuse, or the extension of a constitutional right, or the victory of a political party; it was the empire of a general idea over the powers of the State, in the name of the popular interest; it was the coalition of the democratic spirit with the scientific spirit, in order to sway the Government. When Sir Robert Peel had established the income-tax in 1842, he had done so, not from choice, nor with any systematic purpose, but under the coercion of a practical and pressing necessity, to supply an increasing deficiency, and to restore order in the finances of the country. No such motive any longer existed for this tax; the public revenue exceeded the expenditure; the extraordinary remedy which had been employed against an evil which was now cured, might be dispensed with. Why did Sir Robert Peel still persist in employing it? Was it with a view to amass large savings in the public treasury, or to extinguish the national debt more rapidly? Certainly not: it was solely in order to place himself in a position to make a great experiment, to introduce gradually into the administration of the State that principle of free trade which science had proclaimed, but which hitherto had been only partially and timidly put into practice. And whence did this principle derive strength enough to induce both the Government and the Opposition, in spite of so many conflicting interests, to accept it thus unanimously? Was it

from its recognition merely as an abstract scientific truth? By no means; however great their respect for Adam Smith and Ricardo may have been, neither Sir Robert Peel nor Lord John Russell were endowed with so large a measure of philosophic faith; a faith far otherwise armed and far more imperious—the recognition of the greatest happiness of the greatest number of human beings as the supreme object of society and of government—was the superior power of which Sir Robert Peel had made himself the minister, and which swayed all his opponents; some of them governed like himself, others intimidated or paralyzed, by this great idea, which was clearly or dimly present to their minds, either as an incontestable right, or as an irresistible fact. This idea is in our days the democratic dogma, *par excellence*; and it will be the glory, as it was the strength of Sir Robert Peel, that he was its most sensible, its most honest, and (for a well-regulated society) its boldest representative.

CHAPTER XIV.

Attempts to compromise the Cabinet.—Declaration of Sir Robert Peel.—Speech of Mr. Cobden.—Its great effect throughout the country.—Bitter Speech of Mr. Disraeli.—Styles the Conservative Government an Organized Hypocrisy.—Spirited Reply of Sir Robert Peel. Progress of the League.—Manifesto of Lord John Russell.—The Session closed, and the Corn Laws maintained.—The alarm becomes universal.—Meeting at Manchester.—Lord John Russell's Letter from Edinburgh.—Dissolution of the Ministry.—Sir Robert Peel's Letter to the Queen.—Negotiations.—Sir Robert Peel promises support to the new Ministry under certain conditions.—Obstacles in the way of forming a Cabinet.—Return of Sir Robert Peel to office.—Distrust of the Conservative party.—Personal attacks upon Sir Robert Peel.—Noble declaration made by him.—The Bill for repealing the Corn Laws passed in both Houses. — Bill for the repression of acts of violence in Ireland.—Defection of the Conservative Opposition, and Speech of Lord George Bentinck.—Mr. Cobden.—The Government placed in a minority.—Remarks on the close of Sir Robert Peel's career as minister.—Parting observation of Sir Robert Peel, and tribute to Mr. Cobden.

PASSION in turn blinds and enlightens men. The passionate partizans of the abolition of import duties on corn were astonished and alarmed at Peel's silence on the question. They ought to have congratulated themselves on it. He was evidently perplexed, ill-satisfied with the results of the modifications which he had already introduced in the Corn Laws, but not clearly knowing how far he ought to go in case of any subsequent alteration, and waiting until he received from without either light enough, or a sufficiently strong impulse, to resume his course, with a distinct perception of his object, and a consciousness of his ability to attain it. At the opening of the session of 1845, in the debate on the Address, Lord John Russell, in demanding the application of the

general principles of free-trade to corn, endeavoured to embarrass and compromise the Cabinet, by compelling it to explain its intentions. Sir Robert Peel made no answer. Two days afterwards, Mr. Cobden expressed his surprise that the Queen, in her Speech, should have made no allusion to the sufferings which afflicted the agricultural population in several counties: and he announced his intention to ask for a Committee of Inquiry into the causes of the prevailing agricultural distress. In the short discussion which arose on this subject, some of the defenders of the protective system attributed this distress to the recent diminution of protection. Sir Robert Peel limited his observations to rebutting this charge. 'I do not think,' he said, 'that the change in our law has been the cause of the agricultural distress, and I feel bound to say, that I cannot look to Parliament for any further legislative interference. I think the restoration of the former amount of protection impossible; and even were it possible, I should not sanction the re-establishment of increased protection as a relief to the distress at present existing, which I deplore, but which I attribute to natural causes.'

This immobility, the sole consolation which Peel offered to the partizans of protection, could not satisfy the friends of commercial liberty. Mr. Cobden brought forward his motion for an inquiry into the causes of agricultural distress. After having clearly established the fact that this distress existed, by the statements of the Conservatives themselves, both in and out of the House, as well as by the admission of the Government, he went on to maintain that the protective sys-

tem, which had been devised in order to prevent or relieve it, was its primary and real cause,—that farmers were manufacturers just as much as weavers or cotton-spinners,—and that free-trade would be as beneficial to the labourers in Norfolk or Devonshire as to the workpeople in Leeds or Manchester. He was by turns simple and ingenious, familiar and eloquent, urgent and not bitter, abundant in facts and adroit in argument, evidently animated by a profound conviction and a sincere patriotism, and totally free from jealousy and democratic hostility. 'What is your plan?' he said, addressing the Conservatives. 'I hope it is not a pretence—a mere political game that has been played throughout the last election; and that you have not all come up here as mere politicians. There are politicians in the House; men who look with an ambition—probably a justifiable one—to the honours of office. There may be men who—with thirty years of continuous service, having been pressed into a groove from which they can neither escape nor retreat—may be holding office, and high office; maintained there probably at the expense of their present convictions, which do not harmonize very well with their early opinions. I make allowances for them; but the great body of honourable gentlemen opposite came up to this House, not as politicians, but as the farmers' friends, and protectors of the agricultural interests. Well! what do you propose to do? You have heard the prime minister declare that, if he could restore all the protection which you have had, that protection would not benefit the agriculturists. Is

that your belief? If so, why not proclaim it; but if it is not your conviction, you will have falsified your mission in this House, by following the right honourable baronet into the lobby, and opposing inquiry into the condition of the very men who sent you here. I have no hesitation in telling you that, if you give me a Committee of this House, I will explode the delusion of agricultural protection! I will bring forward such a mass of evidence, and give you such a preponderance of talent and of authority, that when the Blue Book is published and sent forth to the world, your system of protection shall not live in the public opinion for two years afterwards. . . . I cannot believe that the gentry of England will allow themselves to be made mere drum-heads, to be sounded upon by a prime minister to give forth unmeaning and empty sounds, and to have no articulate voice of their own. No! you are the aristocracy of England. Your fathers led our fathers; you may lead us if you will go the right way. But, although you have retained your influence with this country longer than any other aristocracy, it has not been by opposing popular opinion, or by setting yourselves against the spirit of the age. In other days, when the battle and the hunting fields were the tests of manly vigour, your fathers were first and foremost there. . . . You have been always Englishmen. You have not shown a want of courage and firmness when any call has been made upon you. This is a new era. It is the age of improvement, it is the age of social advancement, not the age for war or for feudal sports. You

live in a mercantile age, when the whole wealth of the world is poured into your lap. You cannot have the advantages of commercial rents and feudal privileges, but you may be what you always have been, if you will identify yourselves with the spirit of the age. The English people look to the gentry and aristocracy of their country as their leaders. I, who am not one of you, have no hesitation in telling you, that there is a deep-rooted, an hereditary prejudice, if I may so call it, in your favour in this country. But you never got it, and you will not keep it, by obstructing the spirit of the age. If you are indifferent to enlightened means of finding employment for your own peasantry; if you are found obstructing that advance which is calculated to knit nations more together in the bonds of peace, by means of commercial intercourse; if you are found fighting against the discoveries which have almost given breath and life to material nature, and setting up yourselves as obstructives of that which destiny has decreed shall go on—why, then, you will be the gentry of England no longer, and others will be found to take your place. And I have no hesitation in saying that you stand just now in a very critical position. There is a wide-spread suspicion that you have been tampering with the best feelings, and with the honest confidence of your constituents in this cause. Everywhere you are doubted and suspected. Read your own organs, and you will see that this is the case. This, then, is the time to show that you are not the mere party politicians which you are said to be. We shall be opposed in this measure by poli-

ticians; they do not want inquiry. But I ask you to go into this Committee with me. I will give you a majority of county members. I ask you only to go into a fair inquiry as to the causes of the distress of your own population. Whether you establish my principle or your own, good will come out of the inquiry; and I do therefore beg and entreat you not to refuse it.'

The effect of this speech was great in the House, and greater still in the country; the Anti-Corn-Law League circulated it with unexampled profusion; bales of it were sent into the remotest districts of the country; it was distributed, hawked about, read and commented upon in public meetings, and by family firesides. Sir Robert Peel himself was moved by it, and some of his friends affirm that on that day Mr. Cobden exercised a real influence over him. He nevertheless persisted in rejecting the motion for an inquiry; but he also persisted in remaining silent. It was Mr. Sidney Herbert, and not the prime minister, who undertook to reply to Mr. Cobden; he opposed the inquiry, chiefly on the ground that it was useless, and had already been attempted several times without producing any other effect than to spread alarm. 'As the representative of an agricultural constituency,' he said, 'I must add that it would be distasteful to the agriculturists to come whining to Parliament at every period of temporary distress; but in adverse circumstances, they would meet them manfully, and put their shoulders to the wheel.' This phrase was bitterly commented upon a few days afterwards by Mr. Disraeli.

'I remember,' he said, 'to have heard the right honourable baronet at the head of the Government say, he would sooner be the leader of the gentlemen of England than possess the confidence of sovereigns. We don't hear much of "the gentlemen of England" now. But what of that? They have the pleasures of memory—the charms of reminiscence. They were the right honourable baronet's first love, and though he may not kneel to them now as in the hour of passion, still they can recall the past. He does what he can to keep them quiet; sometimes he takes refuge in arrogant silence, and sometimes he treats them with haughty frigidity; and if they knew anything of human nature, they would take the hint and shut their mouths. But they won't. And what then happens? The right honourable baronet, being compelled to interfere, sends down his valet, who says in the genteelest manner: "We can have no whining here." And that is exactly the case of the great agricultural interest—that beauty which everybody wooed, and one deluded. There is a fatality in such charms, and we now seem to approach the catastrophe of her career. For my part, if we are to have free trade, I, who honour genius, prefer that such measures should be proposed by the honourable member for Stockport (Mr. Cobden) than by one, who by skilful Parliamentary manœuvres, has tampered with the generous confidence of a great people and of a great party. For myself, I care not what may be the result. Dissolve if you please the Parliament you have betrayed; and appeal to the people who, I believe, mistrust you.

For me there remains this at least—the opportunity of expressing thus publicly my belief that a Conservative Government is an Organized Hypocrisy.'

This was more than Sir Robert Peel could submit to; he spoke, and after having briefly repelled the contrary charges made against him in turn by both parties, he went on to say: 'The honourable member for Shrewsbury (Mr. Disraeli) repeats an accusation he made on a former occasion of our having retained power by a forgetfulness of the pledges we gave in Opposition. When I proposed the Tariff in 1842, and when that charge which the honourable member now repeats was made against me, I find the honourable gentleman got up in his place, and stated, "that that charge had been made without due examination of the facts of the case," and that "the conduct pursued by the right honourable baronet was in exact, permanent, and perfect consistency with the principles of free trade laid down by Mr. Pitt. His reason for saying this much was to refute the accusations brought against the Government, that they had put forward their present views in order to get into power." These sentiments I find attributed to Mr. Disraeli. I do not know whether they are of sufficient importance to mention them in the House; but this I know, that I then held in the same estimation the panegyric with which I now regard the attack.'

Personalities ended here. The debate turned upon the numerous import duties abolished by the budget, and the agriculturists defended those by which they profited with a simple selfishness, and with details of

domestic economy, which more than once excited smiles not unmingled with disgust. It is one of the difficulties of representative Government that it places personal interests, in all their nudity, in conflict with general ideas or generous passions which call upon them to make a sacrifice. The public are then inclined to range themselves hastily on the side of reform, forgetting that there is something not merely natural, but legitimate, in the resistance of possessors to innovators, and in the defence of facts consecrated by time against attacks which are often only the fruit of equally interested pretensions. The country party did themselves a real injury by their obstinacy in maintaining intact the duties on butter, bacon, and cheese; and their adversaries availed themselves of this with insulting but effective irony. At one of the meetings of the League in Covent Garden Theatre, Mr. W. J. Fox had violently attacked the aristocracy; he hastened to explain himself. 'All that I have ever said here about the aristocracy has been said of certain members of that body, not in their capacity of aristocrats, but in their occupation as tradesmen. In that character they are, I apprehend, most legitimate objects of animadversion. A man is not to be protected if he keeps a chandler's shop and cheats, because he happens to be one of the members of the aristocracy. This is what I complain of. They keep a great chandler's shop, and they look to every minute article in their store, how they can pervert the power of legislation to make the community pay more for the benefit of aristocracy. There was a time when trading at all was

thought inconsistent with the possession of that dignity. Your feudal baron did not mind robbing by the strong hand, but he turned away with contempt from robbing by the short weight of a protective duty . . . . . Now, when nobles become tradesmen, when dukes become dealers in various commodities, when the memory of the Plantagenets serves to make a better barter in Mark-lane, why, I think it is time for us to call out and say that this is unfair dealing with the other tradespeople of the country. I confess I never picture to myself—it has got such a hold of one's fancy—the Duke of Richmond, but with his coronet on his head, with a corn-sample in his pocket, a salmon in one hand and a whiskey-bottle in the other, and enthroned upon a butter-firkin. The coronet rubs the sample till the grains are more golden; the coronet is thrown into the scale with the salmon, and makes the fish-eater pay a higher price for it; the coronet is a false bottom to the whiskey-bottle, and cheats the purchaser of his Glenlivat; and, last of all, if the butter be not his own, the coronet makes a hole in the firkin, in order to pour in the pitch and tar. Why this incongruity, this perversion of all dignity of station, and whatever is most honourable and majestic in legislative power—this cannot save a set of tradesmen!'

Nothing is more effective than to divert men at the same time that you serve their passions and promote what they consider to be justice; the speeches of Mr. W. J. Fox in Covent Garden Theatre produced an immense effect, and contributed, as greatly as those of Mr. Cobden in the House of Commons, to render

the League daily more popular and more powerful. Its efforts increased with its successes; it instituted public lectures in the manufacturing towns for the purpose of diffusing a knowledge of the fundamental principles of political economy among the working classes; it opened a great bazaar in London, rich with offerings from all parts of the three kingdoms, from the colonies, and from the United States of America, and which realized in seventeen days, by the sale of tickets of admission and of the articles exhibited, the sum of 25,000*l.* In several exclusively agricultural districts the farmers and labourers held meetings, related their distress, discussed its causes, and ended by loudly proclaiming their adherence to the principles of the League, and joining in its curses on the Corn Laws. Instead of becoming exhausted by its protraction, the movement daily grew stronger and more general; the country districts united with the towns, the workmen with their masters, the peasants with the political economists. It was no longer a local question in the country, and a special question among a certain class of the population; free trade became a democratic as well as a scientific passion, and was regarded as a national interest by the instinct of the masses as well as by the reason of the learned.

In this condition of the public mind, Sir Robert Peel strove in vain to remain silent; the Opposition incessantly raised the question, which he did not yet know how to solve, although he daily felt himself more imperiously urged forward to its solution. On the 26th of May, 1845, Lord John Russell proposed

to the House of Commons eight resolutions, which touched upon all the questions which then occupied public attention—the Corn Laws, general freedom of trade, public education, colonization, the law of parochial settlement,—expressing on all these subjects the most liberal views and generous tendencies, opening out prospects and lavishing hopes in every direction, but not indicating any precise measure, or any fixed limit: the vague manifesto of a noble and bold ambition, eager to seize on power, and promising to make a good use of it, without having previously formed a very accurate idea of the use to which that power should be put, and without, indeed, feeling any great anxiety on the point. A fortnight afterwards Mr. Villiers repeated his motion for the complete abolition of the Corn Laws, and notwithstanding some reserve in their language, most of the Whigs as well as of the Radicals, Lord John Russell and Lord Howick as well as Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright, strongly supported him. In thus pressing on Sir Robert Peel, many thought that they were seconding his views, far from displeasing him; and outside the walls of Parliament, in the Covent Garden meetings, they openly said as much. 'Sir Robert Peel,' said Mr. Bright, 'knows well enough what is wanted . . . . He has not been for nearly forty years in public life, hearing everything, reading everything, and seeing almost everything, without having come to a conclusion, that, in this country of 27,000,000 of people, and with an increase of 1,500,000 since he came into power in 1841, a law which shuts out the supply of

food which the world would give to this population cannot be maintained; and that were his Government ten times as strong as it is, it must yield before the imperious and irresistible necessity which is every day gaining upon it. From his recent speech, I would argue that he intends to repeal the Corn Laws. He cannot say what he does, and mean ever to go back to the old foolish policy of protection. Sir Robert Peel came from the very county where the League had its origin; and his fortune was made out of those little delicate fibres of cotton which are destined yet to revolutionize and change the face of things in this country. He sprang from commerce, and, until he has proved it himself, I will never believe that there is any man—much less will I believe that he is the man—who would go down to his grave, having had the power to deliver that commerce, and yet not having the manliness, honesty, and courage to do it.' Mr. W. J. Fox, in his vein of impassioned irony, went still further: 'There is a scene in Talfourd's play of "The Athenian Captive,"' he said, 'in which the vanquished hero, made a slave, has first to take off his helmet, and so to deposit his buckler, then to give up his sword, and then to sink into his servile condition. Now, in this way, Sir Robert Peel is serving the Corn Law. He takes national independence—"that is your buckler, put that down;" class interest—"that is the plume in your helmet, lower that;" the effect on wages and the agricultural classes—"that is your sword, give that up." He strips off one thing after another, but with this difference;

the Athenian Captive was stripped of his appendages that he might be made a slave—Sir Robert Peel strips monopoly of all its powers and appendages, in order that the country may rise to the condition of commercial freedom. He leaves but one plea for the laws which he so stoutly defended—one and only one: and that is, "that protection law is a hundred and fifty years old." So old a law might have been a little wiser. Well, this hoary-headed sinner has been made by Sir Robert Peel to confess to all sorts of iniquities; to having been an inveterate sophist; to having played off all sorts of humbug upon the nation, in order to gratify his private interest; to having been the occasion of immeasurable distress and suffering . . . . His age shall not save him; his day of doom shall arrive . . . . This is not the place in which political matters or political characters not necessarily involved in our own peculiar topics are to be discussed. I, therefore, go not into my opinion of the career of Sir Robert Peel, or of the many reasons that would present themselves to my mind why I might prefer that the country received this great retribution from other hands than his. But there are some reasons why it would be better that he—why it would be better that he, rather than any other man whatsoever—should at last grant this great measure and become its author; and that, after having in various ways gradually led forward the adoption of free-trade principles in the various bearings of our commercial legislation, he should at length crown the whole with this . . . . All my animosity towards

Sir Robert Peel would be gratified, and the worst vengeance I may wish inflicted on him would be this, that in the contemplation of the blessings of free-trade to the country by him conferred, he might read how much better is one single simple act of right, than a whole life of Parliamentary tactics and political expediency.'

This mixture of hostility and co-operation, of harshness and caress, was doubtless not displeasing to Sir Robert Peel, and was probably not without its influence on his final resolution, when the hour for its adoption had come: but I do not notice that until then his conduct and language were at all modified by the treatment he received. He put aside, by suggesting a sort of previous question, and with a tinge of sarcastic disdain, the eight liberal resolutions which Lord John Russell had presented for the approbation of the House. 'I do not think,' he said, 'that the noble lord has brought forward this measure in a manner calculated to lead to any practical results. . . It is very easy to make promises; it is very easy to give a pledge. But it is better to deal with a practical measure than to give a promise beforehand on what may be supposed to be liberal and comprehensive principles. Therefore, not only do I object to the resolutions as involving many subjects which it will be better to dispose of on separate discussions; but I also object to pledge Parliament to an alteration of the law of settlement, to a system of emigration, to comprehensive and liberal education; and then, having given the pledge, when we come to deal prac-

tically with the questions which we have led the country by our resolutions to suppose we shall adopt, to find that we cannot agree among ourselves.' In opposing the immediate and complete abolition of the Corn Laws, as demanded by Mr. Villiers, Peel introduced into the debate moral considerations apart from and superior to the strict principles of commercial liberty on which his adversaries relied. 'Under the existing state of the law,' he said, 'there has grown up a relation between landlord, tenant, and labourer, which does not rest merely on pecuniary considerations. The landlords and proprietors in this country, at least in great districts of it, do not look on land in the light of a mere commercial speculation. I believe that it would be a great evil if they did so. According to the principles for which the honourable gentleman opposite contends, I apprehend that he would say—"Let the landlord make as much of his land as he can; he has a right to do that." On the same principle he has a right, commercially speaking, on the termination of a lease, to let his land for the utmost he can get for it. I will not say that this is not one of the modes by which, if you abolish the Corn Laws, the difficulties the landlord will have to meet will be met. Possibly it may be said—the principles of trade having suddenly been applied to the produce of the land—let the landlord regard the land itself in the same light; let there be no reference to the relations that have existed, perhaps for centuries, between him and the family that occupies the land; let him have no regard for the labourer; let him take the man who

can do most for his ten or twelve shillings a week; let the old and feeble receive no consideration, because they cannot perform the labour which the young, the healthy, and the active can do. Though the land may be so regarded, yet in everything but a purely commercial sense, in a social and moral point of view, I should deeply regret it. It would alter the character of the country, and would be accompanied by social evils which no pecuniary gain, no strict application of a purely commercial principle, could compensate. I will not carry this too far; I will not—because I cannot—say that agriculture ought to be exempt from the gradual application of principles that have been applied to other interests. . . But I do say this, that during the three or four years the present Government have been in power, they have altered our commercial laws in a manner consistent with sound principles, and have not excepted the Corn Laws, and other laws which prohibited the importation of foreign agricultural products. You may think we have not carried the principle far enough; but at any rate, every act we have done has been an act tending to establish the gradual abatement of purely protecting duties. I must claim for them the liberty and the power of continuing, according to their judgment, the application of that principle. I am bound to say that the experience of the past, with respect to those articles on which high duties have been removed, confirms the impression founded on the general principle. But with the strong opinion I entertain, that in the application of this principle it is necessary to exercise the

utmost caution for the purpose of insuring its general acceptance and stability, I cannot consent to give my vote for a proposition that implies the total disregard of every such consideration, in the application of the principle of free trade.'

Touching perplexity of a sincere and conscientious mind, carried forward in the direction of its own inclination by a great flood of public opinion and passion, and struggling painfully against its adversaries, its friends, and itself, so as not to act in this great crisis otherwise than with moderation, patience, and equity!

The session of 1845 drew near its close; on the point of leaving the arena of conflict for a few months, parties were desirous to take their mutual precautions, and to prepare their means of attack or defence, for the approaching struggle. On the 5th of August, Lord John Russell formally reviewed the labours and results of the session which was about to terminate, without concluding with any important or positive proposition, but simply with a view to depreciate the merits of the Cabinet, to point out in what respect its acts had been defective or incomplete, to display its embarrassments, and to put the Opposition in a position to profit by the chances that might arise. Ireland and the Corn-Laws were the two points on which Lord John particularly dwelt—a heavy burden which he strove to render still more heavy on the shoulders of his opponents. Peel made no reply: Sir James Graham undertook the task, and acquitted himself of it with prudence and propriety, without compromising

the future policy of the Government by any absolute affirmation or denial. A grave apprehension weighed on all minds; the weather was bad, the harvest uncertain; Mr. Villiers unsparingly expressed the public anxiety, and made it a weapon of attack upon the Government, which did not allow free admission to the means of subsistence when the internal supplies were on the verge of failure. The Cabinet remained silent. An obscure Conservative, Mr. Darby, endeavoured to reassure the House: 'He had,' he said, 'seen with regret a sort of fiendish delight on the part of some at the bad weather; but he had the pleasure of telling the House that for some days the glass had been rising.' This announcement was received with bursts of laughter from all sides of the House; and four days afterwards, on the 9th of August, 1845, Parliament was prorogued, and the abrogation or maintenance of the Corn Laws was left dependent, it was said, on the variations of the barometer.

These fears were soon realized, and the evil transcended the fears. The weather continued damp and cold. The harvest was late and insufficient. Attacked by a sudden and until then unknown disease, the potatoes failed in many counties in England and Scotland, and altogether throughout Ireland. In the middle of the autumn, the popular suffering was already very great, and the alarm universal and passionate. Every one foresaw the necessity of vast purchases of foreign wheat; but how were they to be effected? An enormous amount of capital was engaged in internal un-

dertakings, and particularly in the construction of new railroads. Bills passed during the last session of Parliament had authorized their construction to an extent of 2,841 miles, and at a cost of about forty-eight millions sterling. These works were to be executed within three years, which would involve an outlay of more than 1,300,000*l.* per month. Plans for similar undertakings had been prepared, and were ready for submission to Parliament during the ensuing session, which would require a further outlay of more than a hundred millions sterling. A financial crisis seemed as imminent as the famine. In vain did the optimists, from interest or propensity, maintain that the evil was exaggerated; the public alarm was increased by their very efforts to allay it. The Central Society for the Protection of Agriculture, which had been formed for the defence of the protective system against the League, addressed to all the local associations which had been instituted with the same object, a circular to contradict the prevailing reports as to the insufficiency of the harvest, and thus to excite the zeal of the partizans of protection by reviving their confidence; but the League, which had slackened its efforts for a moment, at once resumed all its earnestness. At a great meeting held at Manchester on the 28th of October, Mr. Cobden, with his usual vehemence, called on the Government, that is to say, on Sir Robert Peel, to save the country which was menaced with famine. 'Witness Russia! witness Turkey! witness Germany, Holland, and Belgium!' he exclaimed; 'these Governments have not waited, but when their people

have been threatened with want, they have at once thrown open their ports. Why has not our Government taken a similar course? Why have they waited to learn Christianity from the Turk, or humanity from the Russian? Is it because our Government is less merciful than that of the Mahometan Sultan? Is it that our boasted constitutional power is less humane than that of the despot of Russia? Or is it that our prime minister, who holds the responsible position of sultan in this country, is afraid that, if he takes the step, he will not have the support of the country? If that be his doubt, we meet here to give him all the support which we can give him. . . There is no man in the world, whether he be the Grand Turk, or whether he be a Russian despot, who has more power than Sir Robert Peel has in this country. He has the power: and I say he is a criminal and a poltroon if he hesitates a whit.'

At the end of October and during the early part of November, the Cabinet met frequently. It became known that it had examined the reports which had been sent in from all quarters, respecting the real produce of the harvest, the actual quantity of grain that still remained in the country, the resources that could be derived from foreign parts, the prevalence of the potato disease, and the condition of the population in Ireland. Sir Robert Peel had, it was said, proposed several measures; but he had met with serious differences of opinion; three only of his colleagues—Lord Aberdeen, Sir James Graham, and Mr. Sidney Herbert—had coincided with his views. The Cabinet

separated. Nothing was done; nothing was announced. Great astonishment was felt at its inaction and silence. Its friends asserted that it was anxious not to increase the existing alarm by openly admitting that it was well-founded, without being able to apply to it a prompt and effectual remedy; but few persons would accept the explanation; the more ardent were irritated by it, the moderate persisted in their surprise.

Suddenly there appeared in the newspapers a letter addressed from Edinburgh by Lord John Russell to his constituents, the electors of the City of London. It was dated November 22, 1845, and ran in these words:—

'Gentlemen,—The present state of the country, in regard to its supply of food, cannot be viewed without apprehension. Forethought and bold precaution may avert any serious evils—indecision and procrastination may produce a state of suffering which it is frightful to contemplate.

'Three weeks ago, it was generally expected that Parliament would be immediately called together. The announcement that Ministers were prepared at that time to advise the Crown to summon Parliament, and to propose on their first meeting a suspension of the import duties on corn, would have caused orders at once to be sent to various ports of Europe and America for the purchase and transmission of grain for the consumption of the United Kingdom. An Order in Council dispensing with the law was neither

necessary nor desirable. No party in Parliament would have made itself responsible for the obstruction of a measure so urgent and so beneficial.

'The Queen's Ministers have met and separated, without affording us any promise of such seasonable relief.

'It becomes us, therefore, the Queen's subjects, to consider how we can best avert, or at all events mitigate, calamities of no ordinary magnitude.

'Two evils require your consideration. One of these is the disease in the potatoes, affecting very seriously parts of England and Scotland, and committing fearful ravages in Ireland.

'The extent of this evil has not yet been ascertained, and every week, indeed, tends either to reveal unexpected disease, or to abate, in some instances, the alarm previously entertained. But there is one misfortune peculiar to the failure in this particular crop. The effect of a bad corn harvest is, in the first place, to diminish the supply in the market, and to raise the price. Hence diminished consumption, and the privation of incipient scarcity, by which the whole stock is more equally distributed over the year, and the ultimate pressure is greatly mitigated. But the fear of the breaking out of this unknown disease in the potatoes induces the holders to hurry into the market, and thus we have, at one and the same time, rapid consumption and impending deficiency, scarcity of the article and cheapness of price. The ultimate suffering must thereby be rendered far more severe than it otherwise would be. The evil to which I have

adverted may be owing to an adverse season, to a mysterious disease in the potato, to want of science or of care in propagating the plant. In any of these cases, Government is no more subject to blame for the failure of the potato crop, than it was entitled to credit for the plentiful corn harvest which we have lately enjoyed.

'Another evil, however, under which we are suffering, is the fruit of Ministerial counsel and Parliamentary law. It is the direct consequence of an Act of Parliament, passed three years ago, on the recommendation of the present advisers of the Crown. By this law, grain of all kinds has been made subject to very high duties on importation. These duties are so contrived that the worse the quality of the corn, the higher is the duty; so that when good wheat rises to 70*s.* a quarter, the average price of all wheat is 57*s.* or 58*s.*, and the duty 15*s.* or 14*s.* a quarter. Thus the corn barometer points to fair, while the ship is bending under a storm.

'This defect was pointed out many years ago by writers on the Corn Laws, and was urged upon the attention of the House of Commons when the present Act was under consideration.

'But I confess, that on the general subject, my views have, in the course of twenty years, undergone a great alteration. I used to be of opinion that corn was an exception to the general rules of political economy; but observation and experience have convinced me that we ought to abstain from all interference with the supply of food. Neither a Govern-

ment nor a Legislature can ever regulate the corn market with the beneficial effects which the entire freedom of sale and purchase are sure of themselves to produce.

'I have for several years endeavoured to obtain a compromise on this subject. In 1839 I voted for a Committee of the whole House, with the view of supporting the substitution of a moderate fixed duty for the sliding scale. In 1841, I announced the intention of the then Government of proposing a fixed duty of 8*s.* a quarter. In the past session I proposed the imposition of some lower duty. These propositions were successively rejected. The present First Lord of the Treasury met them in 1839, 1840, and 1841, by eloquent panegyrics on the existing system—the plenty it had caused, the rural happiness it had diffused. He met the propositions for diminished protection in the same way in which he had met the offer of securities for Protestant interests in 1817 and 1825—in the same way in which he met the proposal to allow Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham, to send members to Parliament in 1830.

'The result of resistance to qualified concessions must be the same in the present instance as in those I have mentioned. It is no longer worth while to contend for a fixed duty. In 1841, the free-trade party would have agreed to a duty of 8*s.* a quarter on wheat, and, after a lapse of years, this duty might have been further reduced, and ultimately abolished. But the imposition of any duty at present, without a provision for its extinction within a short period would

but prolong a contest already sufficiently fruitful of animosity and discontent. The struggle to make bread scarce and dear, when it is clear that part, at least, of the additional price goes to increase rent, is a struggle deeply injurious to an aristocracy which, this quarrel once removed, is strong in property, strong in the construction of our Legislature, strong in opinion, strong in ancient associations, and the memory of immortal services.

'Let us then unite to put an end to a system which has been proved to be the blight of commerce, the bane of agriculture, the source of bitter divisions among classes, the cause of penury, fever, mortality, and crime among the people.

'But if this end is to be achieved, it must be gained by the unequivocal expression of the public voice. It is not to be denied that many elections for cities and towns in 1841, and some in 1845, appear to favour the assertion that free trade is not popular with the great mass of the community. The Government appear to be waiting for some excuse to give up the present Corn Law. Let the people by petition, by address, by remonstrance, afford them the excuse they seek. Let the Ministry propose such a revision of the taxes as in their opinion may render the public burdens more just and more equal; let them add any other provisions which caution, and even scrupulous forbearance, may suggest; but let the removal of restrictions on the admission of the main articles of food and clothing used by the mass of the people be required, in plain terms, as useful

to all great interests, and indispensable to the progress of the nation.

'I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

'Your obedient servant,

'J. RUSSELL.'

On reading this letter, great was the emotion of the public, and by no one was it so much felt as by Sir Robert Peel. He was reproached with his changes of opinion, his concessions to popular wishes, his parliamentary manœuvres—and here was the first of the Whig aristocrats, the leader of the Opposition, abandoning that which he had supported for twenty years, a certain measure of protection to native agriculture and a fixed duty instead of the sliding scale, and abruptly passing over into the Radical camp, and demanding entire freedom of trade. And among Lord John Russell's lieutenants, several, and those the most important, Lord Morpeth at Leeds, and Mr. Macaulay at Edinburgh, were taking the same step. In this new state of parties, what would be the position and strength of the Cabinet during the next session? Amid a movement thus hastened forward, and beneath a pressure thus heavily increased, how would it be possible to persist in a slow and middle policy? how could the Government continue to resist by making concessions?

On the 25th of November, 1845, Sir Robert Peel again assembled his colleagues, and proposed to them the only course of conduct which appeared to him to be practicable. The debate in the Cabinet lasted for

several days. The most important of the opponents whom Sir Robert had encountered a month previously, the Duke of Wellington, gave up his opposition; his great good sense and the fatigues of age inspired him with a distaste for resistance which he foresaw would be either extremely dangerous or utterly vain, and he preferred union in the Cabinet and the maintenance of a Conservative Government to the prolongation of the protective system, which, in any case, was greatly weakened. But some others, and more especially Lord Stanley, refused to break with their party by entirely abandoning agricultural protection. It was thought for a moment that Sir Robert Peel had carried the Cabinet with him, and on the 3rd of December, the *Times* announced that the abolition of the Corn Laws had been resolved upon, and that Parliament was to meet at once to deliberate on this measure. Three days afterwards, however, the question was settled in a very different way; the Ministry was dissolved, Sir Robert Peel had sent in his resignation to the Queen who had accepted it, and Lord John Russell had been summoned from Edinburgh to form a Cabinet.

On the 8th of December, Sir Robert Peel, in tendering his resignation, addressed to the Queen the following letter:—

'Sir Robert Peel presents his humble duty to your Majesty, and, influenced by no other motive than the desire to contribute, if possible, to the relief of your Majesty from embarrassment, and to the protection of the public interests from injury, is induced to make

to your Majesty this confidential communication explanatory of Sir Robert Peel's position and intentions with regard to the great question which is now agitating the public mind.

'Your Majesty can, if you think fit, make this communication known to the Minister who, as successor to Sir Robert Peel, may be honoured by your Majesty's confidence.

'On the 1st of November last, Sir Robert Peel advised his colleagues, on account of the alarming accounts from Ireland, and many districts in this country, as to the failure of the potato crop from disease, and for the purpose of guarding against contingencies, which in his opinion were not improbable, humbly to recommend to your Majesty that the duties on the import of foreign grain should be suspended for a limited period, either by Order in Council or by legislative enactment: Parliament, in either case, being summoned without delay.

'Sir Robert Peel foresaw that this suspension, fully justified by the tenor of the reports to which he has referred, would compel, during the interval of suspension, the reconsideration of the Corn Laws.

'If the opinions of his colleagues had then been in concurrence with his own, he was fully prepared to take the responsibility of suspension—and of the necessary consequence of suspension, a comprehensive review of the laws imposing restrictions on the import of foreign grain and other articles of food, with a view to their gradual diminution and ultimate removal.

'He was disposed to recommend that any new

laws to be enacted should contain within themselves the principles of gradual reduction and final repeal.

'Sir Robert Peel is prepared to support, in a private capacity, measures which may be in general conformity with those which he advised as a minister.

'It would be unbecoming in Sir Robert Peel to make any reference to the details of such measures.

'Your Majesty has been good enough to inform Sir Robert Peel that it is your intention to propose to Lord John Russell to undertake the formation of a Government.

'The principle on which Sir Robert Peel was prepared to recommend the reconsideration of the laws affecting the import of the main articles of food was in general accordance with that referred to in the concluding paragraph of Lord John Russell's letter to the electors of the City of London.

'Sir Robert Peel wished to accompany the removal of restrictions on the admission of such articles, with relief to the land from any charges that may be unduly onerous, and with such other provisions as, in the terms of Lord John Russell's letter, "caution and even scrupulous forbearance may suggest."

'Sir Robert Peel will support measures founded on that general principle, and will exercise any influence he may possess, to promote their success.'

Lord John Russell arrived in London on the 10th of December; and after having consulted his friends, he proceeded on the following day to wait on the Queen at Osborne, almost determined to decline the duty which she proposed to confide to him. He

would be, he said, in a minority of from ninety to a hundred votes in the House of Commons; but the Queen put Sir Robert Peel's letter into his hands. 'This changes the state of the question,' said Lord John; and he returned at once to London to inform his friends of this new circumstance, and to deliberate with them upon it. Negociations were established between him and Sir Robert. The Whigs requested to be informed, with precision and detail, what measures Peel would have proposed, if he had continued at the head of the Government, in order to put his principle into execution. Peel replied that he did not consider it his duty thus to enter into particulars in his preliminary declarations. Lord John then offered to draw up his own plan in a complete form, and to communicate it to Sir Robert Peel, in order to be perfectly sure that it had his approval also. Sir Robert declined this proposition with equal firmness; he had clearly expressed the principle of the measure to which he would promise his support, and he could go no farther. The Whigs would have wished their former rival to place himself, tied hand and foot, at their service; and Sir Robert Peel refused to take upon himself the whole burden, under the name and for the advantage of his successors. In great conjunctures, this conflict of subtle and always rather obscure manœuvres, under an outward show of perfect sincerity, is one of the weak points in representative government; and men of lofty character can alone surmount its embarrassments by simple, prompt, and bold resolutions and words. I do not

find that, in their negociations at this period, either Sir Robert Peel or the Whigs displayed this greatness of soul. The Whigs aimed at too much security, and Sir Robert at too much liberty: when men talk of saving a nation, they must be ready to accept more doubtful chances and to make heavier sacrifices. Lord John Russell took a step further: forced to admit, as he himself stated subsequently in the House of Commons, that Sir Robert Peel's reasons for refusing to give the detailed pledges that were demanded of him, were powerful and valid, he wrote a long letter to the Queen, on the 16th of December, in which he set forth with precision what would be his plan of conduct in regard to the great question of the day: it was not, as Sir Robert Peel had suggested in his letter of the 8th of December, the suspension for the present of the import duties on foreign corn, with a view to their gradual reduction and ultimate removal; it was the immediate and complete abolition of those duties. 'Should this proposal,' said Lord John Russell, 'preclude Sir Robert Peel from affording that support to the new Government which he has so spontaneously and handsomely offered, I must humbly decline the task so graciously confided to me by your Majesty.' The Queen communicated this letter on the same evening to Sir Robert Peel, who replied next day that he would keep the promise which he had made on resigning the seals of office, to assist in effecting a settlement of the Corn Law question, but that he did not think it consistent with his duty to approach the examination of this

important question in the House of Commons, bound by such a previous engagement as was demanded of him. Lord John determined to rest satisfied with this declaration, and told the Queen that he was ready to undertake to form a Cabinet; but when he came to make his final and personal arrangements, an obstacle arose—which some said was unexpected, but which others averred was foreseen and willingly used as a pretext for getting decently out of a difficult position—which caused the failure of the combination. Lord Howick, who had recently become Earl Grey by the death of his illustrious father, and who was the most decided of all the Whigs in favour of the immediate and complete abolition of the Corn Laws, positively refused to become a member of the new Cabinet, if Lord Palmerston, of whose foreign policy he did not approve, also had a seat in it. Lord John Russell thought he could not dispense with the services of either; and on the 20th of December, he informed the Queen that, having been unable to secure the harmonious agreement of all his friends, it was impossible for him to form a Cabinet.

I here leave Sir Robert Peel to speak for himself, as he did a month afterwards, on the 22nd of January, 1846, in the House of Commons, when he explained his conduct during this ministerial crisis. 'I remained,' he said, 'under the impression that my functions had ceased, until Saturday, the 20th of December. On Thursday the 18th, it was intimated to me by her Majesty, that the noble lord (Lord John Russell) had undertaken the duty of forming an

administration, and on the 19th I received a gracious communication from Her Majesty, stating, that as my relation to Her Majesty was about to terminate, she wished again to see me, for the purpose of taking a final farewell; and Saturday the 20th of December, was the day appointed for that purpose. Upon waiting on Her Majesty—having heard through the courtesy of the noble lord that he had found all his efforts to form an administration were in vain—upon waiting on Her Majesty, she was pleased to inform me that, so far from taking my final leave, she was obliged to demand of me that I should withdraw my offer of resignation. Her Majesty had understood from those of my colleagues who had differed from me, that they were unprepared to form, and did not advise the formation of a Government on the principle of the existing protective principle; and the noble lord (Lord John Russell) having signified to Her Majesty that he had failed in his attempt to form a Government, Her Majesty requested that I should not persist in the tender of my resignation. I do not hesitate to say that I informed Her Majesty on the instant, and without a moment's hesitation, that I would return to town as Her Majesty's minister; that I would inform my colleagues of my determination, and urge them to assist me in carrying on the business of the country. . . . . My noble friend (Lord Stanley) at once expressed the regret he felt that he could not co-operate with me in the difficult circumstances in which I was placed; but my colleagues generally thought it was their duty to assist me in the arduous task I had

undertaken. I have now stated to the House the circumstances under which I again returned to office.'

Judging of it from a distance, from appearances, and from my own personal instincts, I should be disposed to say that he returned to office under favourable circumstances, and with a good chance of rallying around him, by some happy compromise, that great Conservative party, which for ten years he had so ably and successfully laboured to form, to which he had restored, and from whom he had received, the chief power in the State, and whose disorganization could not but distress him most painfully. It was a fortunate thing for him that Lord John Russell, as well as Mr. Cobden, had pronounced himself in favour of the immediate and complete abolition of the Corn Laws; Sir Robert Peel thereby found himself again placed in that position of moderator and arbiter which he had always sought, and which was naturally his own. He had to ask the Conservatives to make great sacrifices, but those sacrifices were not extreme; he only desired the actual suspension of the duties on corn in order to arrive, by a progressive reduction and within a fixed period, which might be more or less long, at their final abolition. The Whigs and Radicals were far less moderate in their demands. The Conservatives thus found themselves placed between a sudden and absolute reform, and one of those measured and gradual reforms which, amid the greatest commotions of interest or opinion, the Government, the aristocracy, and the people of England have so often had the wisdom to accept and accomplish.

But neither the Conservative party, nor the Whig and Radical Opposition, nor the people at large, nor even Sir Robert Peel himself, were on this occasion in a humour to act with that prudent wisdom which thinks of everything, takes account of everything, and is anxious to maintain a good general policy, even when one single fixed idea prevails like an epidemic, and governs all minds.

In a very short speech, delivered on the 9th of February, 1846, in the first debate on Sir Robert Peel's new commercial legislation, by an obscure member of the House of Commons, Mr. Hope, the representative of Maidstone, I find this outburst of discontent much rather than of dissent. 'On last Tuesday week,' he said, 'we were all present here to know the changes to be proposed by the right honourable baronet at the head of the Government, and what the grounds were which had led him to those changes. What has been the argument by which the right honourable baronet has supported his measures of free trade? It is, forsooth, that it is consistent with the principles of true Conservative policy. But what does the right honourable baronet mean by true Conservative policy? Toryism is a tangible thing; Whiggism is a tangible thing; Protection is a tangible thing; Free Trade is a tangible thing: in all these things there is a meaning; but what meaning in the world is there in this strange new word Conservatism—this word which has arisen since 1832, at the time when the old Tory party, split up in divisions, found a difficulty in coming together under one

banner? What is this Conservatism, which is not animated by the spirit of Toryism, nor of Whiggism,—no, but by true Conservative policy? . . . There was a minister once very powerful; it was in the days before the House of Commons had become what it now is; when the power of England was exercised by the Crown, and that minister swayed the Crown as ministers in these days sway Parliament. One little expression which escaped that minister caused his fall. The power of Wolsey did not long survive his expression, "*Ego et rex meus*;" and the right honourable baronet's influence, perhaps, may not long survive the use of his favourite phrase, "I and my party." The honourable gentlemen who have been elected to seats in this House on strong Protectionist principles, are so much expected to follow their leader, that they have been brought down to the House of Commons, as they were on last Tuesday week, without even the common courtesy being accorded them which they had received formerly, when measures of comparatively minor importance were to be proposed—the courtesy, namely, of giving them some slight intimation of what the measure was that was to be brought under the consideration of Parliament. It is not so long since such courtesy was observed towards us. I myself was one of those members who, in 1841, knew something about what was to take place before the address. But a total change in the whole commercial system of the empire—as though it were a mere bubble, a mere fleabite—is brought forward without our having received any previous notice or inkling of what

we were to expect. Such is true Conservative policy!'

Thus were exhibited the inconveniences of Sir Robert Peel's character, and of his mode of acting, as a party leader, in a free State. This judicious politician, this skilful tactician, this consummate financier, this reasoner who had so marvellous a knowledge of facts, this orator who was often so eloquent and always so powerful, did not know how to live on intimate terms with his party, to imbue them beforehand with his ideas, to animate them with his spirit, to associate them with his designs as well as with his successes, with the workings of his mind as well as with the chances of his fortune. He was cold, taciturn, and solitary in the midst of his army, and almost equally so in the midst of his staff. It was his maxim that it was better to make concessions to his adversaries than to his friends. The day came when he had to demand great concessions from his friends, not for himself, for he sought none, but for the public interest, which he had warmly at heart. He found them cold in their turn, not prepared to yield, and strangers to the transformations which he had himself undergone. He was not in a position to make them share his views, and to bring them to a necessary compromise. He had fought at the head of the Conservative party for ten years as leader of the Opposition, and for five years as leader of the Government. Out of three hundred and sixty members who had ranged themselves around him in 1841, at the opening of Parliament, he with great difficulty persuaded

a hundred and twelve to vote with him in 1846, on the question with which he had bound up his fate.

But God forbid that I should impute to the sole imperfections of a superior man, the imperfect success of his designs! The faults of the Conservative party were revealed at the same time, and they were of a far graver character than those of their leader. For four years, the party had been secretly grumbling and growing disordered beneath the weight of the efforts and sacrifices which Sir Robert Peel had imposed—efforts at variance with their prejudices and tastes, sacrifices of their self-love and their interest. The Maynooth grant, the measures for the relief of Catholics, Dissenters, and Jews, the double revision of the tariff, and a number of other reforms which, though useful, were offensive to antiquated scruples of conscience and old habits of domination, had exhausted the stock of liberal spirit and enlightened impartiality, possessed by the bulk of the Conservative party. When the Corn Law question arrived, their wisdom was at an end. Of all innovations that could be imposed on them, this was the most onerous; it was an attack on private interests, injuring them in the present, and alarming them for the future, to what extent it was not clearly known. Private interests defended themselves with the obstinacy of aristocratic egotism; they took no heed of the alleviations which Sir Robert Peel applied to the injury which he caused them to suffer. They were not alone aggrieved by his measures; the protective system was abandoned with regard to the majority of manufactured articles, as well as of agri-

cultural commodities, and the cotton-spinners of Manchester and Leeds were exposed, as well as the country gentlemen, to foreign competition; and, as regarded the principal kinds of grain, instead of immediately and absolutely abolishing the import duties, he had remained satisfied with reducing them, and their entire abolition was not to be effected until after the expiration of three years. He granted to agriculture, upon various local taxes and expenses, reductions and encouragements which were not without their value. But the interests upon which he encroached, treated these kindnesses with angry disdain, and repelled Sir Robert Peel's scheme as vehemently as they would have repelled that of the Radicals. They were able to invoke, in support of their position, principles far nobler than their pecuniary claims—the spirit of conservatism, and fidelity to their party; they wrapped themselves round with this banner, sincere in their falsehood, and convinced that, in defending themselves, they were defending political morality and the cause of order in the State. Any one who reads these long debates attentively, will be struck by the small amount of space which the question itself occupies in the speeches of the opposing Conservatives. Among them, Sir Robert Peel had two able and eloquent adversaries, Mr. Disraeli and Lord George Bentinck: the former says but a few words on the substance of the measure, but directs against Sir Robert's political character and conduct all his blows, which glitter and pierce like steel; the latter dwells more fully on the economic merit and the motives of the proposition.

The man of horse-races and pleasures has carefully studied the facts, and minutely discusses them, displaying with complacency the results of his new and zealous studies; but it is always with considerations of honour and political fidelity that he commences and terminates his attacks. Sincerely convinced of the advantages of the protective system, which he defends from regard to the public interest, as well as to the interest of his own party, it is nevertheless to Sir Robert Peel's transformation, defection, and treachery that he incessantly recurs; warned, by the instinct of the conflict, that of all his weapons this is the best, and that he better serves his cause by the feelings he excites than by the arguments he adduces.

Sir Robert Peel follows an exactly opposite course; it is to the question itself that he constantly brings back his adversaries and his audience; the circumstances that decided him to bring forward his propositions, the effects which they are calculated to produce for the welfare of the people, their utility to the State generally, and to the very party who oppose them—such is the substance of the three great speeches which he delivered on the 22nd of January, the 16th of February, and the 27th of March, 1846, in the course of this memorable debate. A pure and disinterested policy pervades them; they exhibit to us the public man addressing himself to public men, solely desirous to make them clearly understand the public necessities under the influence of which he has resolved upon measures which, in the public interest, he calls upon them to sanction. We find no aggressive

or defensive personalities; far from indulging in them, he formally puts them aside. 'Two matters of great importance,' he said, 'have occupied the attention of the House during this debate—the one, the manner in which a party should be conducted; the other, the measures by which an imminent public calamity shall be mitigated, and the principles by which the commercial policy of a great empire shall for the future be governed. On the first point, by far the greater part of this debate has turned. I do not undervalue its importance; but great as it is, surely it is subordinate in the eyes of a people to that other question to which I have referred—the precautions to be taken against impending scarcity, and the principles by which your commercial policy shall hereafter be governed. On the party question I have little defence to make. These are, I admit at once, the worst measures for party interests that could have been brought forward. I admit also that it is unfortunate that the conduct of this measure, so far as the Corn Laws are concerned, should be committed to my hands. It would, no doubt, have been far preferable, that those should have the credit, if credit there be, for an adjustment of the Corn Laws, who have been uniform and consistent opponents of those laws . . . . I was prepared to facilitate that adjustment by others by my vote, and by the exercise of whatever influence I could command. . . . . With respect to the course which I have pursued towards those who so long have given me their support—I admit that it is but natural that they should withhold from me their confidence. I

admit that the course which I am pursuing is at variance with the principles on which party is ordinarily conducted. But I do ask of them whether it is probable that I would sacrifice their favourable opinion and their support, unless I was influenced by urgent considerations of public duty? . . . . Notwithstanding that which may have passed in this debate—notwithstanding the asperity with which some have spoken—I will do that party which has hitherto supported me the justice they deserve. No person can fill the situation I fill without being aware of the motives by which a great party is influenced. I necessarily have an opportunity of knowing what are the personal objects of those around me; and this I will say, notwithstanding the threatened forfeiture of their confidence, that I do not believe (speaking generally of the great body of the party), that there ever existed a party influenced by more honourable and disinterested feelings. . . . . But, whether holding a private station, or placed in a public one, I will claim for myself the privilege of yielding to the force of argument and conviction, and acting upon the results of enlarged experience. It may be supposed that there is something humiliating in making such admissions: I feel no such humiliation; I have not so much confidence in the capacity of man to determine what is right or wrong intuitively, as to make me feel abashed at admitting that I have been in error. I should feel humiliation if, having modified or changed my opinions, I declined to acknowledge the change, for fear of incurring the imputation of inconsistency. The question is whether the

facts are sufficient to account for the change, and the motives for it are pure and disinterested.'

No public man, however, is covered by conscience, patriotism, or disdain, with so strong a cuirass as not at last to feel the repeated blows which are dealt upon him; and it was rather from an excess of susceptibility than from a lofty indifference, that Sir Robert Peel refused to notice these attacks. Once only did he allude to them: 'I feel it rather hard,' he said, 'to find myself the object of accusations that I have been unfaithful to the interests of the country, or to any special and peculiar interest. . . I see it over and over again repeated, that I am under a personal obligation for holding the great office which I have the honour to occupy. I see it over and over again repeated that I was placed in that position by a party; and that the party which elevated me to my present position is powerful enough also to displace me. . . Let us understand—and I am speaking not for myself, but for the many honourable men of different parties who have preceded me—let us understand what is the nature of the obligation which we owe for being placed in office. . . . I have served four sovereigns: George III. and his three successors. . . I served each of those sovereigns at critical times and under critical circumstances. I did so with constant truth to each, and I constantly said to each of those sovereigns that there was but one favour, one distinction, one reward which I desired, and which it was in their power to offer me—namely, the simple acknowledgment, on their part, that I had been to them a

loyal and faithful minister. I have now stated my view of the obligations which are conferred on those in power. . . . Believe me, to conduct the Government of this country is a most arduous duty. I may say it without irreverence, that these ancient institutions, like our physical frames, are "fearfully and wonderfully made." It is no easy task to insure the united action of an ancient monarchy, a proud aristocracy, and a reformed constituency. I have done everything I could do, and have thought it consistent with true Conservative policy, to reconcile those three branches of the State. I have thought it consistent with true Conservative policy to promote so much of happiness and contentment among the people, that the voice of disaffection should be no longer heard, and that thoughts of the dissolution of our institutions should be forgotten in the midst of physical enjoyment. These were my objects in accepting office—it is a burden too great for my physical and far beyond my intellectual structure; and to be relieved from it with perfect honour would be the greatest favour that could be conferred on me. But as a feeling of honour and a strong sense of duty require me to undertake those responsible functions, I am ready to incur these risks, to bear these burdens, and to front all these honourable dangers. But I will not take the step with mutilated power and shackled authority. I will not stand at the helm during such tempestuous nights as I have seen, if the vessel be not allowed fairly to pursue the course which I think she ought to take. I will not undertake to direct the course of the vessel

by the observations taken in 1842. . . I do not wish to be the Minister of England; but while I have the high honour of holding that office, I am determined to hold it by no servile tenure. I will only hold that office upon the condition of being unshackled by any other obligations than those of consulting the public interests, and of providing for the public safety.'

These are the most salient traces of personal emotion, on the part of Sir Robert Peel, that I can discover in the course of this debate. On the 16th of February, after having for several hours defended his measure in all its details, and under all its aspects, with consummate ability, before he resumed his seat, he gave utterance to emotions of a more disinterested and a grander character. 'This night,' he said, 'is to decide between the policy of continued relaxation of restriction, or the return to restraint and prohibition. This night you will select the motto which is to indicate the commercial policy of England. Shall it be "Advance!" or "Recede!" Which is the fitter motto for this great empire? Survey our position, consider the advantages which God and nature have given us, and the destiny for which we are intended. We stand on the confines of Western Europe, the chief connecting link between the old world and the new. The discoveries of science, the improvement of navigation, have brought us within ten days of St. Petersburgh, and will soon bring us within ten days of New York. We have an extent of coast greater in proportion to our population and the area of our land

than any other great nation, securing to us maritime strength and superiority. Iron and coal, the sinews of manufacture, give us advantages over every rival in the great competition of industry. Our capital far exceeds that which they can command. In ingenuity, in skill, in energy, we are inferior to none. Our national character, the free institutions under which we live, the liberty of thought and action, an unshackled press, spreading the knowledge of every discovery and of every advance in science—combine with our national and physical advantages to place us at the head of those nations which profit by the free interchange of their products. And is this the country to shrink from competition? Is this the country to adopt a retrograde policy? Is this the country which can only flourish in the sickly artificial atmosphere of prohibition? . . .

'Choose your motto, "Advance!" or "Recede!" Many countries are watching with anxiety the selection you may make. . . I counsel you to set them the example of liberality. Act thus, and it will be in perfect consistency with the course you have hitherto taken. Act thus, and you will provide an additional guarantee for the continued contentment, and happiness, and well-being of the great body of the people. Act thus, and you will have done whatever human sagacity can do for the promotion of commercial prosperity. You may fail. Your precautions may be unavailing. They may give no certain assurance that mercantile and manufacturing prosperity will continue without interruption. Times of depres-

sion must perhaps return; unfavourable seasons, gloomy winters may again set in; "the years of plenteousness may have ended," and "the years of dearth may have come;" and again you may have to offer the unavailing expressions of sympathy, and the urgent exhortations to patient resignation.

'Commune with your own hearts and answer me this question: will your assurances of sympathy be less consolatory,—will your exhortations to patience be less impressive,—if, with your willing consent, the Corn Laws shall have then ceased to exist? Will it be no satisfaction to you to reflect that, by your own act, you have been relieved from the grievous responsibility of regulating the supply of food? Will you not then cherish with delight the reflection that, in this the present hour of comparative prosperity, yielding to no clamour, impelled by no fear,—except, indeed, that provident fear which is the mother of safety,—you had anticipated the evil day, and, long before its advent, had trampled on every impediment to the free circulation of the Creator's bounty?'

Whether voluntary or involuntary, spontaneous or forced, the admiration excited by this speech was general; the Radicals gave expression to their appreciation of it with enthusiasm. 'The right honourable baronet,' said Mr. Bright, 'delivered last night a speech, I will venture to say, more powerful and more to be admired than any speech which has been delivered within the memory of any man in this House. I watched the right honourable baronet as he went home last night, and, for the first time, I

envied him his feelings.' Then, turning to the Conservatives, he continued: 'You chose the right honourable baronet, and placed him in office—why? Because he was the ablest man of your party. You always said so, and you will not deny it now. Why was he the ablest? Because he had great experience, profound attainments, and an honest regard for the good of the country. . . . . There are such things as the responsibility of office. Look at the population of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and ask yourselves whether, with all your valour, and although you talk of raising the standard of protection, there are men in your ranks who will take their seats on the Treasury bench pledged to a maintenance of the Corn Law. I defy them to do it.'

I think that Mr. Bright was right, and that, at the point at which the affair stood, the boldest of the opposing Conservatives would not have ventured to undertake the government on the conditions which they wished to impose on Sir Robert Peel. They did not the less persist in their demands and denunciations. It is one of the commonest faults of the Opposition vehemently to demand what they would not attempt to accomplish, thus making themselves appear guilty, in the eyes of honest and sensible persons, either of frivolous recklessness or ambitious hypocrisy. The Whigs, who were in a better position, because they were consistent and could afford to be frank without being angry, loyally supported Sir Robert Peel, throughout the whole debate: but they had small merit in doing so; he was at once

carrying out their principles and forwarding their ambition; he was dissolving his own party without robbing the Whig leaders of their adherents. The language and conduct of both parties were perfectly truthful; the Whigs interfered but seldom in the debate, in order to make it quite unquestionable that their support was as firm as it was necessary, but not giving any pledge beyond the question of the Corn Laws, and carefully avoiding any act that might have led to the belief that there was a systematic and general alliance between them and Sir Robert Peel. 'We are told,' said Lord John Russell, 'that the right honourable baronet will be more successful in carrying these plans than we should,—I say again that it is by our aid, and in consequence of the conduct that we shall pursue, that the measure will attain its success. I think myself bound to say so in justice to those who act with me. And if the right honourable baronet has the glory of adopting plans of commercial freedom which will benefit his country, which will enable the poor man to get a better reward for his labour, which will increase the demand for all the productions of this country, and which, after these questions are settled, will, I hope, open the way to the moral improvement of the people, hitherto prevented by their want of adequate means of comfort—if the right honourable baronet has the glory of carrying a measure fraught with such large and beneficial results, let ours be the solid satisfaction that, out of office, we have associated together for the purpose of aiding and assisting the triumph of the Minister of the

Crown. I must say, on this occasion,' he added, 'that, during the whole of our administration, our motives never received a fair construction, nor did our measures ever receive an impartial consideration from those who were our political opponents.'

Sir Robert Peel was not deceived as to the meaning of this bitter reminiscence, and he took care himself to free the Whigs from every other tie to him but that of their special and temporary connection. 'I have been taunted,' he said, 'and have more than once been told, that my days as a minister are numbered. But I have introduced this measure, not for the purpose of prolonging my ministerial existence, but for the purpose of averting a great national calamity, and for the purpose of sustaining a great public interest. I have more than once been asked how long I can reckon upon the support of those honourable gentlemen opposite, without whose votes I could not hope to carry this Bill through the House—how long, in fact, I can reckon upon enjoying their support with respect to other subjects? I know, as well as those who taunt me, that I have not any right to the support or confidence of those honourable members. I acknowledge, with perfect sincerity and plainness, that they have supported me in passing this measure, if it does pass into a law. I do not say this as a private man—I do not on private grounds attach importance to it; but I feel and acknowledge every proper obligation to them, as a public man, for the support which they have given to this measure, and for studiously avoiding everything calculated to create embarrass-

ment to its progress: but then our differences remain the same. If this measure pass, our temporary connection is at an end; I have not the slightest right to expect support or forbearance from them, nor shall I seek it by departing in the slightest degree from that course which my public duty may urge me to adopt.'

Amid this mutual frankness, after a desperate conflict of nineteen days, the House of Commons adopted Sir Robert Peel's entire plan by a majority of 98 votes. In this final division, among the 327 members who voted in favour of the bill, there were 104 Conservatives who had remained faithful to Sir Robert, and 223 Whigs or Radicals; 222 Conservatives and 7 scattered votes obstinately denounced the measure.

On the 18th of May, the bill was laid before the House of Lords, and there also it was vehemently contested; for eleven days, all the facts, all the arguments, all the interests, all the passions which had confronted one another in the House of Commons reappeared on this new stage, with less violence and personality, for the hostile leader was not there, but with all the greater perseverance because there the opponents of the measure might hope for success. Fifty-three noble lords took part in the discussion; Lord Stanley and Lord Ashburton at the head of the opposition—Lord Brougham, Lord Grey, Lord Clarendon, and Lord Lansdowne, foremost among the defenders of the liberal plan. On the third day of the debate on the second reading of the bill, the Duke of Wellington spoke: 'I am aware, my lords,' he said, 'that I address you on this occasion under many

disadvantages. I address your lordships under the disadvantage of appearing here, as a Minister of the Crown, to press this measure upon your adoption, knowing at the same time how disagreeable it is to many of you, with whom I have constantly acted in political life, with whom I have long lived in intimacy and friendship, on whose good opinion I have ever relied, and whose good opinion, I am happy to say, it has been my good fortune hitherto to have enjoyed in no small degree. . . . I am aware that I address your lordships at present with all your prejudices roused against me for having adopted the course I have taken—a course which, however little I may be able to justify it to your lordships, I considered myself bound to take, and which, if it were to be again adopted to-morrow, I should take again. I am in Her Majesty's service—bound to Her Majesty and to the sovereigns of this country by considerations of gratitude, of which it is not necessary that I should say more to your lordships. It may be true, my lords, and it is true, that, under such circumstances, I ought to have no relation with party, and that party ought not to rely upon me. Be it so, my lords; but in the month of December last, I felt myself bound, by my duty to my sovereign, not to withhold my assistance from the Government of my right honourable friend Sir Robert Peel—not to refuse to resume my seat in Her Majesty's councils—knowing, as I did, at the time, that my right honourable friend could not do otherwise than propose to Parliament a measure of this description, nay more, this very measure. . . .

I have stated to you the motives on which I have acted; I am satisfied with those motives myself; and I should be exceedingly concerned if any dissatisfaction respecting them remained in the mind of any of your lordships. . . . And now, my lords, I will not omit, even on this night—probably the last on which I shall ever venture to address to you any advice again—I will not omit to give you my counsel with respect to the vote you ought to give on this occasion. . . . . Look a little at the measure on which you are going to vote to-night—look at the way in which it comes before you. . . . It was recommended in the speech from the Throne, and it has been passed by a large majority of the House of Commons. . . . It is a bill which has been agreed to by the other two branches of the Legislature; and if we should reject this bill, the House of Lords will stand alone in rejecting it. Now that, my lords, is a situation in which, I beg to remind your lordships, I have frequently stated you ought not to stand. . . . You have vast influence on public opinion; you may have great confidence in your own principles; but without the Crown or the House of Commons you can do nothing. . . . But I will take your lordships a step further, and let you see what will be the immediate consequences of rejecting this bill. Another Government will, I conclude, be formed; but whether another Government is formed or not, let me ask, do your lordships suppose that you will not have this very same measure brought before you by the next Administration. And do you mean to reject it a second time? Do

you mean the country to go on in the discussion of this measure two or three months longer? I know the object of the noble lords who are opposed to this bill is, that Parliament should be dissolved—that the country should have the opportunity of considering the question—and that it may be seen whether or not the new House of Commons will agree to this measure. Now, really if your lordships have so much confidence in the result of other elections, I think that you might venture to rely upon those which must occur, according to the common course of law, within a twelvemonth from this time; and that you might leave it to the Parliament thus elected, to consider the course which it will take on the expiration of the term of the bill now before you, for that bill is to last only till the year 1849. Do not compel the Queen to dissolve Parliament. Your lordships have now the option of immediately accepting this bill, reserving it to another Parliament to pass or reject it again, at the time when its operation will cease, in the year 1849—or of rejecting the bill at once, and obtaining a fresh election, of which you are so desirous. This is the choice before your lordships.'

Either in consequence of the influence and reasoning of the Duke of Wellington, or because the House of Lords (which was probably the case) had already made up its mind, his advice was followed, and the second reading of the bill was carried by a majority of forty-seven votes.

Five weeks afterwards, on the 25th of June, the House of Commons was called on to discuss a bill for

the repression of acts of violence and disorder in Ireland, which had already been adopted in the House of Lords on the motion of Lord St. Germans. Under the influence of the popular disappointment which had followed the failure of the agitation for the Repeal of the Union of the two kingdoms, and amid the alarms and sufferings occasioned by the famine, offences against personal security and the public peace had multiplied to a frightful extent. In 1844, these offences had reached the number of 1,495, but in 1845 they had risen to 3,642, and were still on the increase. In five counties more especially, —Tipperary, Clare, Roscommon, Limerick, and Leitrim,—all personal security had disappeared. To observers unacquainted with party passions and engagements, the necessity of the bill was evident; the Government that is most determined to redress the grievances that weigh upon a people, must begin by repressing the crimes which are destructive of society. The discussion was, nevertheless, most animated; the Whigs and Radicals opposed the bill, on the ground that it would be more irritating than effectual. The Cabinet and Sir Robert Peel himself energetically supported it, and the first reading was carried by a majority of 149 votes. Faithful to their principles, nearly all the Conservatives, whether they had been adversaries or adherents of the Government on the Corn question, voted on that day in favour of the Irish Bill; but when the second reading came on, the Conservative Opposition, whose anger knew no bounds, resolved to seize this opportunity of avenging

their injuries by overthrowing the Cabinet, and Lord George Bentinck, exceeding himself even in violence, openly proclaimed this determination. 'We used,' he said, 'to be told by the right honourable baronet, that he would not consent to be a minister on sufferance; but I think he must be blinded indeed by the flatteries of those around him, if he has not learned that he is now a minister on sufferance, tossed from one side to the other, sometimes depending on honourable gentlemen opposite, sometimes depending on my friends around me, supported by none but his forty paid janissaries, and some seventy other renegades, one half of whom, while they support him, express their shame at doing so. When, I say, this is the state of the Government, it is high time for us to speak out on this measure, and in this debate to mark our sense of their conduct by voting against them. . . . It is high time that the country should know—no, the country needs not to know—but it is time that Europe should know, and that the world should know, the treachery which has been committed by those now in power, and that they do not represent the voice or the feelings of the people of England. . . The time has come when those gentlemen who have been glad to avail themselves of the treason of the right honourable baronet—though, I believe, from all that I hear said amongst them, that they abhor the traitor—having secured the success of those measures which they have consistently supported—the time, I say, has now come when they will mark their sense of the course pursued by the Government; and by

driving them from power, will compel them to make atonement for the political treachery of which they have been guilty towards the constituencies of the empire, and for the dishonour which, by their conduct, they have brought upon Parliament and upon the country.'

In reply to questions from Mr. Sidney Herbert and some other members, Lord John Russell defended himself and his party from having made any previous arrangement, or concerted any scheme with Lord George Bentinck and his friends; but he declared that he was still opposed to the Irish bill, and determined to vote against the second reading as he had voted against the first. Several Radicals made a similar declaration. Matters were in this state on the 25th of June, and the debate had lasted six days, when, in the midst of the sitting, the messengers of the House of Lords appeared at the bar of the House of Commons, bringing with them several bills which the Lords had adopted: the Corn Importation Bill was among the number; the Speaker announced it, and loud acclamations broke the curious silence which had prevailed on the introduction of the messengers. The debate went on. At the close of the evening, Mr. Cobden spoke: 'I am not going to argue the question,' he said; 'but I wish to say one or two words as to the spirit of the votes we are going to give. I shall find myself in the lobby to-night, and probably in a majority, with a large number of gentlemen who voted for the first reading of the bill. Now I don't intend to offer one word in the way of

putting a construction upon the motives of honourable gentlemen who are going to vote differently upon this occasion; but as such a combination may seem rather odd, and may be looked upon by the country with some suspicion, I wish to clear myself at all events—and probably in doing so, I may also render some service to other honourable members—by showing that the construction which may be put upon the vote about to be given by the noble lord, the member for Lynn (Lord George Bentinck), does not apply to us. The noble lord has told us very frankly what he considers the object of the majority to be, that we are joining together to do justice on the right honourable baronet (Sir Robert Peel) for his policy during the present session. I think he said that it must be the object of every honest man to inflict summary punishment upon the traitor, although some of us may like the treachery. Now I beg to repudiate, for myself and for many honourable gentlemen on this side of the House, such an unjust and unfair construction of the votes we mean to give. We should be acting very inconsistently indeed with popular opinion—and we especially affect to represent popular opinion—if we were to give such a vote as this; because I apprehend there will be no dispute on this point, that the right honourable baronet has been the means of passing this session one of the most popular measures that any minister could possibly undertake. We should be outraging popular opinion if we allowed such a construction to be put upon our votes at this moment, on the very day that this great measure has

been brought down to this House from another place. . . . . I do not mean to say one word on the merits of the bill now before us. But it seems the right honourable baronet attaches so much importance to it, that, according to general report, he has determined to stand or fall by it. With that I have nothing to do. . . . I have only to say, in contradiction to the noble lord (Lord George Bentinck), that if the right honourable baronet chooses to retire from office in consequence of this vote, he carries with him the esteem and gratitude of a larger number of the population of this empire than ever followed any minister that was ever hurled from power. . . . I think he has shown great forbearance to honourable members below the gangway in not having availed himself of the strength he has with the country, and, taking them at their word, before he abandons office, appealing to the country. But should he not do so, I am not misinterpreting the opinion of the people, not only of the electors, but especially of the working classes, when I tender the right honourable baronet, in my own name, as I might do in theirs, my heartfelt thanks for the unwearied perseverance, the unswerving firmness, and the great ability, with which he has, during the last six months, conducted one of the most magnificent reforms ever carried in any country, through this House of Commons.'

No one spoke after Mr. Cobden resumed his seat. The division took place, and the combination of the three classes of opponents, the Whigs, the Radicals, and the irritated Conservatives, placed Sir Robert

Peel in a minority of seventy-three votes. The announcement of this result was received with profound silence; those who were most delighted with their success did not dare to show that they were proud of it. Sir Robert, on leaving the House, was saluted with loud acclamations. An illustrious Mussulman traveller, Ibrahim Pacha, the eldest son of Mehemet Ali, who was present that day at the House of Commons, had placed before him in the space of one hour, the double spectacle of the triumph and defeat of the prime minister of England; a strange contrast, the explanation of which he probably inquired, and perhaps did not very clearly understand.

What was passing at that moment in the soul of Sir Robert Peel? Was he satisfied or sorrowful, proud or despondent? Did he feel more keenly his triumph or his defeat? Did he regret the power that he had lost with so much glory? I am inclined to think that, in his inmost heart, his satisfaction was great; for two feelings, both of which were very powerful in him, were satisfied, his pride, and his desire for repose after victory. This mighty athlete, who had fought so much, had, if I mistake not, but little taste for conflict; it painfully jarred with his susceptible and somewhat solemn dignity. This man, who from his youth had been a political actor, knew none of the pleasures of intimacy in public life, and gladly fell back on the affections and joys of domestic life, which God had granted to him in large and gentle abundance. For some time, moreover, he had been conscious of a certain amount of physical and moral

weariness; though he had never displayed greater vigour of mind and will, it was remarked that his eye was less bright, his step less firm, and some tinge of melancholy was even detected in his voice. What circumstances could ever have been more favourable to him for retirement? It was at once obligatory and glorious. He ended his ministerial career a victor, when he could have retained power only at the cost of continual embarrassments and defeats, or by exposing his country and himself, by the dissolution of Parliament, to the perilous chances of that great democratic wind, of which he had hitherto experienced only the propitious breath. That nothing might be wanting to the honour of his expiring Cabinet, he received at this very moment the news that the difference between England and the United States with regard to the possession of the Oregon territory was adjusted, and that the American Senate and President had agreed to the draft convention which had been prepared and sent to Washington six weeks previously, by Lord Aberdeen. At home, the greatest battle that Sir Robert Peel had ever fought was won; abroad, all the questions that he had found in suspense were settled. In retiring from office, he bequeathed victory to his cause, and peace to his country.

On the 29th of June, 1846, five years after the vote of non-confidence which had overthrown the Whig Cabinet in 1841, and four days after the rejection of the Bill for the repression of outrages in Ireland, the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel announced—

the former to the House of Lords, and the latter to the House of Commons—that the Queen had accepted the resignations of the Cabinet, and directed Lord John Russell to form a new administration. The Duke of Wellington merely stated the fact, and invited the House of Lords to continue to sit, but simply for the transaction of current business, until the new Cabinet had entered on its functions. Sir Robert Peel cast a retrospective glance over the important questions he had been called upon to deal with, recapitulated the great reasons that had influenced his conduct, congratulated himself on the results he had obtained, thanked his adversaries for having loyally accepted the decision of Parliament upon measures which they had been fully entitled to censure and to oppose, explained why he could not allow himself to dissolve the House, with a view to retain possession of power, and after having related in detail the conclusion of the Oregon affair, with friendly satisfaction for Lord Aberdeen, and the kindliest feeling towards the United States of America: 'I have now,' he said, 'executed the task which my public duty imposed on me. I trust I have said nothing which can lead to the revival on the present occasion of those controversies which I have deprecated. Whatever opinions may be held with regard to the extent of the danger with which we were threatened from the failure in one great article of subsistence, I can say with truth that Her Majesty's Government, in proposing those measures of commercial policy which have disentitled them to the confidence of many who heretofore gave

them their support, were influenced by no other motive than the desire to consult the interests of this country. Our object was to avert dangers which we thought were imminent, and to terminate a conflict which, according to our belief, would soon place in hostile collision great and powerful classes in this country. The maintenance of power was not a motive for the proposal of these measures; for I had not a doubt that, whether these measures were accompanied by failure or success, the certain issue must be the termination of the existence of this Government. It is, perhaps, advantageous for the public interest that such should be the issue. I admit that the withdrawal of confidence from us by many of our friends was a natural result. When proposals are made, apparently at variance with the course which ministers heretofore pursued, and subjecting them to the charge of inconsistency—it is perhaps advantageous for this country, and for the general character of public men, that the proposal of measures of that kind, under such circumstances, should entail that which is supposed to be the fitting punishment, namely, expulsion from office. I therefore do not complain of that expulsion. I am sure it is far preferable to the continuance in office without a full assurance of the confidence of this House.

'I said before, and I said truly, that in proposing our measures of commercial policy, I had no wish to rob others of the credit justly due to them. I must say, with reference to honourable gentlemen opposite, as I say with reference to ourselves, that neither of us

is the party which is justly entitled to the credit of them. There has been a combination of parties generally opposed to each other, and that combination, and the influence of Government, have led to their ultimate success. But the name which ought to be associated with the success of those measures, is not the name of the noble Lord, the organ of the party of which he is the leader, nor is it mine. The name which ought to be, and will be, associated with the success of those measures, is the name of one who, acting, I believe, from pure and disinterested motives, has, with untiring energy, made appeals to our reason, and has enforced those appeals with an eloquence the more to be admired, because it was unaffected and unadorned: it is the name of Richard Cobden.

'I now close the observations which it has been my duty to address to the House, thanking them sincerely for the favour with which they have listened to me in performing this last act of my official career. Within a few hours, probably, that power which I have held for the period of five years, will be surrendered into the hands of another—without repining, without complaint on my part—with a more lively recollection of the support and confidence I have received during several years, than of the opposition which during a recent period I have encountered. In relinquishing power, I shall leave a name, severely censured, I fear, by many who, on public grounds, deeply regret the severance of party ties—deeply regret that severance, not from interested or personal motives, but from the firm conviction that fidelity to party engagements—

the existence and maintenance of a great party—constitutes a powerful instrument of government. I shall surrender power, severely censured also by others who, from no interested motive, adhere to the principle of protection, considering the maintenance of it to be essential to the welfare and interests of the country. I shall leave a name execrated by every monopolist who, from less honourable motives, clamours for protection because it conduces to his own individual benefit: but it may be that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of good will in the abodes of those whose lot it is to labour, and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, when they shall recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened with a sense of injustice.'

On the conclusion of this speech, cheers burst forth on all sides. After long and confused emotion on the part of the House, Lord Palmerston and Mr. Hume, the one with clever appositeness, the other with sincere unreserve, addressed to Sir Robert Peel expressions of an esteem full of admiration. The House adjourned to the 3rd of July. Sir Robert Peel went out, resting on the arm of his friend, Sir George Clerk, the member for Stamford. A great crowd thronged the approaches; on seeing him, all took off their hats, opened their ranks to let him pass, and accompanied him in silence to the door of his house. On the 3rd of July, 1846, when the House of Commons resumed its sittings, the Whig Cabinet, under the direction of Lord John Russell, was in possession of power.

CHAPTER XV.

Novel position of Sir Robert Peel.—Last speech of Mr. O'Connell in the House of Commons.—The repentance of England towards Ireland.—Munificence of England.—Motion for the temporary suppression of the Navigation Laws carried.—Great alarm among Ship-owners.—Vehement speech of Lord George Bentinck.—Great meeting at Manchester.—Popular Education.—Proposition to admit the Jews into Parliament.—Condition of Ireland.—Emigration from Ireland.—Proposition to relieve Encumbered Estates in Ireland.

Sir Robert Peel, on retiring from office, found himself in a position, the most tempting and the most perilous even to the most legitimate pride—the position of one enjoying empire without the cares of Government, and authority without responsibility. I have seen noble minds succumb to this temptation, and indulge too complacently in the lofty pleasures of an easy superiority, censuring and protecting in turn the Government, without bearing its burdens. Sir Robert Peel did not split upon this rock. He had governed powerfully, and he felt no need to display, as a critic, an ability of which he had given proof as an actor. He knew, by his own experience, the difficulties of Government, and his reason, as well as his sense of justice, refused to impute all the blame to the errors or inefficiency of the governors. He was, I think, not

very anxious to resume possession of power; and he felt no irritation or ill-humour against those who possessed it, for they opposed no obstacle to the fulfilment of his desires. During four years, from 1846 to 1850, from his resignation to his death, he retained this delicate and exceptional attitude, enjoying at once independence and influence, the patron of his former adversaries, criticising them without bitterness, and giving them his support without arrogance.

This was for him at first an easy virtue; as they came to light, facts proved him to be right, and justified his acts by confirming his previsions. The famine developed itself in Ireland in terrible proportions and with frightful consequences; in a few days, and by formal proclamations, the Lord Lieutenant declared fifty-eight districts to be in a state of distress; and this distress was so great, that it is hard to believe the most authentic testimonies regarding it. In one alone of these districts, that of Skibbereen, out of a population of 62,000 inhabitants, 5,060 died in three months, and 15,000 rose in the morning not knowing how they should find food for the day. At Bantry, the magistrates who were appointed to inquire into the causes of the deaths, brought in, after one inquiry, forty verdicts of 'died of hunger.' 'I have known instances,' said a clergyman of the Church of England, the Rev. Mr. Hazlewood, at a meeting in Exeter Hall—'I have known instances where the starving people sucked the blood of living cattle, in order to allay the cravings of hunger.' Associations were formed, meetings were held, subscriptions were

raised in all quarters, for the purpose of relieving these horrible calamities; and in the Parliament which met on the 19th of January, 1847, Ireland was the first subject of deliberation. Ministry and Opposition, Whigs and Tories, Protestants and Catholics, all showed themselves equally affected by her sufferings, and eager to give her aid. O'Connell, almost dying, and already so weak that his voice could scarcely be heard, though every one in the House kept silence to hear him, drew, without irritation or exaggeration, a most pathetic picture of the miseries of his fellow-countrymen: 'I do not think,' he said, 'that honourable members are sufficiently impressed with the horrors of the situation of the people of Ireland. I do not think they understand the miseries—the accumulation of miseries—under which the people are at present labouring. Twenty-five per cent. of the whole population will perish, unless the House affords effective relief. They will perish of famine and disease, unless the House does something speedy and efficacious, not doled out in small sums, not in private and individual subscriptions, but by some great act of national generosity, calculated upon a broad and liberal scale. . . . . It is asserted that the Irish landlords do not do their duty. Several of them have done their duty—others have not; . . . . . but recollect how encumbered is the property of Ireland, how many of her estates are in Chancery, how many are in the hands of trustees. She is in your hands—in your power! If you do not save her, she cannot save herself. And I solemnly call upon you to recollect that

I predict, with the sincerest conviction, that one-fourth of her population will perish unless Parliament comes to their relief.'

These words, spoken on the 8th of February, 1847, were the last public words of the Irish patriot; he left the House of Commons and England, and had not even time to reach Rome, in order to die there; for he expired on the journey, at Genoa, on the 15th of May following. A striking example, among many others, of that mixture, at once sad and noble, of devotedness and selfishness, of sincerity and falsehood, of high-mindedness and vulgarity, of vanity and greatness, which may be found allied in the heart and life of man! O'Connell, if he had lived, would have seen all England, both Parliament and people, moved towards Ireland with a compassion full of secret remorse, and lavishing on her with full hands, their wealth, their zeal, and their enlightenment, in order to alleviate her misfortunes. It is the honour of Christian civilization, that it has carried repentance even into the souls of nations; England has repented of having oppressed Ireland; Europe has repented of having practised slavery. Pagan antiquity knew nothing of these awakenings of the public conscience, of these moral illuminations which suddenly change the hearts of men, and ere long effect a corresponding change in the state of societies. Tacitus could only deplore the decay of the ancient virtues of Rome, and Marcus Aurelius could only wrap himself sorrowfully up in the stoical isolation of the sage; there is nothing to show that these superior minds so much as suspected

the great crimes of their social state even in its best days, or aspired to reform them. The Christian world, from age to age, sees new truths and virtues appear on its horizon, which reveal to it at once its grandeur and its faults, and renew its youth by purifying it. Even before O'Connell made the demand, England felt herself obliged to act towards Ireland with that enormous munificence which could alone, if not repair, at least expiate her secular wrongs: before Parliament met, immense public works had been ordered and undertaken in Ireland—works ill conceived, most of them of no utility, and with no positive real object, true *ateliers nationaux*, which served only temporarily to supply starving multitudes with bread, and to prove the solicitude of the Government. In the month of January, 1847, five hundred thousand labourers were thus employed in Ireland; each of them, it was said, earned nearly enough to provide four persons with food, so that altogether two millions of people were in this way officially fed; and on the 25th of January, when Lord John Russell addressed the House on the subject, the expense for the month already amounted to more than 700,000*l.*[1] The Parliament, at the same time that it endeavoured to regulate somewhat more satisfactorily the object and supervision of these works, decided that the expense should not be levied on Ireland alone, but that England should bear

[1] In the month of February following, the number of labourers thus employed was, from the 1st to the 6th, 615,055; from the 6th to the 13th 655,715; from the 13th to the 20th 668,749; from the 20th to the 27th 708,228. The total expense for the month amounted to 944,141*l.*

her part of the charge. Considerable sums were advanced to the Irish landowners for the purchase of seed, for the drainage of their land, and for the reclamation of bogs. In return, the heavy burden of the Poor Law was imposed upon them, from which they had until then been exempt. Finally, it was determined that there should be an absolute suspension, until the 1st of September, 1847, not only of all import duties upon corn, but also of the navigation laws, which restricted importation by raising freights; and the stanchest partizans of the protective system, while making their reservations against the general policy of the Cabinet, voted for these measures, although they did not fail to see whither they would lead. 'When the shipping interest joined the Anti-Corn-Law League in forcing the repeal of the Corn Laws,' said Lord George Bentinck, 'I always anticipated that it would find its own turn to come next, and would suffer the penalty of its rashness.'

Lord George Bentinck was not mistaken; the temporary suppression of the Navigation Laws had no sooner been voted, than Mr. Ricardo applied to the House of Commons for the formation of a Committee to investigate the actual effects of those laws; and Sir Robert Peel supported the motion. 'You have been from time to time,' he said, 'compelled to relax the navigation laws, not from any theoretical principle, but from mere necessity. Let us then consider, maturely and deliberately, whether the recent changes that have been effected in our commercial policy may not render some further change necessary in our

Navigation Laws.' The alarm spread among the maritime population, in the dockyards and in the ports, among the shipowners, the shipbuilders, and the captains of merchant vessels. On the 9th of February, 1848, twenty thousand sailors assembled together, led by the boatswains of the ships that were lying in the Thames; all the steam-boats and wherries that could be obtained, conveyed this vast procession, amid the sounds of popular music and with banners displayed, to Westminster Bridge, from whence they proceeded to Buckingham Palace to present to the Queen a memorial in defence of the Navigation Laws; but three months afterwards, on the 15th of May, 1848, the Cabinet itself, by the mouth of the President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Labouchere, proposed the reform of those laws. After a protracted debate, at two o'clock in the morning, reviving the interest of the exhausted House, Sir Robert Peel spoke energetically in support of the measure. It was carried in principle; and in the following year, on the 11th of July, 1849, notwithstanding a strenuous opposition in the House of Lords, free competition was established in the navigation, as well as in the trade, of England.

Brought back either by the natural course of affairs, or by the manœuvres of the Opposition, nearly all the questions which Sir Robert Peel's government had had to treat, as well those which it had settled as those which had remained in suspense, reappeared under his successors: the income-tax, the monetary system and the organization of the Bank,

the state of the colonies, the sugar duties, the differential duties on sugars produced by free labour and those grown by slave labour, the number of the hours of labour in factories, and so forth. The country was in one of those epochs of crisis and of social transformation when the old system, everywhere and constantly in conflict with the new spirit, defends itself obstinately, though with but little hope, striving every day to ward off the danger of the morrow, or to repair the defeat of the day before, and keeping its intrepid but useless defenders unremittingly in the various breaches that are opened in its walls. Lord George Bentinck and Mr. Disraeli continued to play this part in the House of Commons, and both of them directed their blows far more against Sir Robert Peel than against the Whig Ministers: Mr. Disraeli infusing some amount of compliment into his attacks, now that they were no longer made on a man in power; Lord George, with a bold and loyal devotion to the interests as well as to the principles of the Protectionist party, always ready for the fray, prompt to confront a danger, and as laborious as he was vehement, but with little discernment and no moderation, equally eager to adopt arms against his enemies or plans for the purpose of endeavouring to gain some popularity, and inspiring but little confidence in his assertions or his views, even in those who were most ready to honour his sincerity and courage. In order to relieve Ireland, he proposed a gigantic scheme of railways, for the construction of which England was to advance sixteen millions

sterling. In the debate on the bill for the introduction of the Poor Law into Ireland, he gave way to transports of the utmost violence, accusing the Ministry and their free-trade principles of having caused the famine, and maintaining, with a great parade of statistical details, that if they had built four hundred workhouses in Ireland, sufficiently near to one another that no poor person should be more than three miles and a half away from some such establishment, they would have saved thousands of lives, and spared the State, during the year, an expense of 4,319,733*l.* Whether he came to the assistance of the Cabinet, or defended himself on his own account, Sir Robert Peel was able to repel these attacks with moderation and gracefulness, for he had no actual or vulgar interest in the conflict, and engaged in it merely from a feeling of honour, or with a view to the public good and to the advantage of his rivals. During four years he persevered consistently in this more noble than difficult line of conduct; called upon to justify his policy almost as frequently as if he had been a minister, and acquitting himself of this task without any malicious vanity or indirect hostility, without regard to his old disagreements, and without looking to see who reaped the fruit of his new successes.

On one occasion alone, he did not deny himself the pleasure of expressly reminding his old antagonists that they had not behaved towards him as he was behaving towards them. Harassed in their turn by the disorders and outrages which desolated Ireland,

the Whigs, on the 29th of November, 1847, proposed through their Home Secretary, Sir George Grey, a bill for the repression of crime and the protection of life in that country, very similar to that which they had rejected seventeen months previously, in order to overthrow the Peel ministry. Sir Robert frankly gave his approval and support to the measure. 'I should be unwilling,' he said, 'to let the first night of the debate on the proposal of Her Majesty's Government pass, without publicly declaring that it is my intention to give to that proposal a cordial support. I will quarrel with none of the details of the measure. . . . I cannot resist the force of the appeal which the right honourable gentleman has made to the House, because it is precisely the same appeal which some two years since I myself made, and made in vain.' And, turning towards the Conservative malcontents, who, in June 1846, had combined with the Whigs against him, he added: 'I trust that those who opposed the measure brought forward in 1846, will not think it incumbent upon them, from any consideration for the late Government, to withhold their support from the bill now before the House.'

The bill was carried by 224 votes against 18, and Sir Robert Peel's opponents thus undertook themselves to justify the measure for which they had driven him from office. All the great acts of his administration came victoriously through the test of the new circumstances which time brought to pass, and of the new conflicts to which they gave rise; and the greatest of all his achievements, the final establishment of Free Trade

in Corn, occasioned, on the 31st of January, 1849, a striking popular manifestation. That day witnessed the expiration of the term of three years, appointed by the Act of 1846, for the abolition of all import duties. Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, Mr. George Wilson, all the leaders of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and more than two thousand persons, met together at Manchester, to celebrate by a solemn banquet the precise moment of their complete triumph. After numerous speeches, five minutes before midnight, the band struck up the air of a song which had obtained great popularity in connection with this question, entitled: *The Good Time Coming.* The assembled multitude sang it in chorus. The clock struck twelve. The chairman, suddenly imposing silence, announced that 'the good time had come.' The whole meeting rose and saluted with the loudest acclamations the first moment of the reign of full Free Trade in Corn. On the following day, the 1st of February, 1849, when the Session of Parliament opened, the report of the Manchester banquet filled the columns of the newspapers, and was the staple theme of public conversation.

To the old questions which had occupied the attention of Sir Robert Peel's government, and which reappeared under his successors, new questions were added, in which he hastened to take part. The first was that of popular education. Sir Robert, during his administration, had not forgotten it, and the sum of 30,000*l.* which had been annually voted by Parliament since 1833, for the assistance of schools, had been raised on his re-

commendation first to 40,000*l.*, then to 75,000*l.*, and finally to 100,000*l.*; but he had had no opportunity of developing his ideas on this subject. Such an opportunity was furnished him, during the Session of 1847, by Lord John Russell, who himself brought forward the question of popular education with a mass of details and a solemnity which indicated the importance that the Whig Cabinet intended to attach to it. Sir Robert Peel entered warmly into the matter, like a man who had long given it his serious attention, and who regretted that he had done so little for so great a public interest. 'If,' he said, 'we could know the extent of evil which has arisen from the present ignorance of the people—if there could be presented to us a full account of all the crime which has been generated by the want of education—if we could obtain a statement, extending over the last fifty years, of all the vice which the evil example of parents has impressed upon the character and disposition of children; the violence and rapine which ignorance has occasioned, the offences against life and property which a neglect of education has superinduced—if we could only enumerate how many immortal souls have been within that period sent into the presence of their Creator and their Judge, ignorant of the great truths of religion and the principles of Christianity—we should shudder at our own grievous disregard of duty, and struggle without delay to repair the evils of our past neglect.' The remedies proposed by Lord John Russell were not as yet very extensive, and his language went much further than

his measures; but the principles on which they were based were sound and practical: the State was to come to the assistance of the efforts of all parties—the Church, the Dissenting denominations, lay corporations, and private individuals—to promote popular education, and was to extend its power and superintendence generally throughout this great work, without anywhere interfering either with religious belief or with the free development of voluntary zeal. Sir Robert Peel warmly supported the propositions of the Cabinet. Two features are particularly remarkable in his speech; his firm attachment to the Anglican Church, and his scrupulous equity towards different creeds. 'I am,' he said, 'for a religious as opposed to a secular education. I do not think that a secular education alone would be acceptable to the people of this country. I believe that such an education is only half an education, but with the most important half neglected. . . . . I am not denying that the Established Church is powerful—I rejoice that it is so. I think that the power of the Church is increasing; and why is it increasing? Because of her willingness to make timely and salutary reforms; because of her readiness to consent to the reduction of superfluous emoluments for the higher orders in the Church, and to devote those emoluments to an increase of Church accommodation and the increase of the spiritual charge of the people by inferior labourers. . . . . It is because the Church is becoming aware of the necessity, both for temporal and spiritual objects, of attending to the education of the people; it is be-

cause her conduct is guided by that necessity, that her influence has been gained. . . . . But, attached as I am to the Church of England, I should be sorry to give to that Church any advantage by means of this Education vote, if I thought it unjust to the Dissenters. . . . . On the contrary, however, after maturely considering the objections of the Dissenting body, I do not believe them to be founded in truth. . . . . The principle acted upon in these minutes is one of perfect equality. . . . . In the course of this discussion a question of great importance has arisen with regard to the condition of other subjects of Her Majesty than either those who are members of the Established Church, or those who are usually called Dissenters. I speak of the Roman Catholic population. I am of opinion that no establishment of general education, even in England, could be deemed complete which excluded the Roman Catholic population. . . . . You are going to widen the sphere of the measure; and the more wide that sphere is, the more marked is the exclusion. Therefore, I think the time is come—and I am the more anxious to avow it because the avowal of opinions in this respect may be unpopular—I think the time is come when justice and good policy will require from you the mature consideration of the position of the Roman Catholics. Take the case of the Roman Catholic population of Manchester or Liverpool or any other great town. In Manchester there is a district called the "Irish town," in consequence of the great numbers of Irish resident there, amounting to from 60,000 to 70,000.

Now, what class of people are these? They come over there relying on their industry, and they bargain for their labour. They have no natural protectors; there are few wealthy Catholics immediately connected with Manchester to care for their interests; and there is no one probably to superintend their education. There are 60,000 or 70,000 of them, and how is their education to be attended to? Is it for the advantage of the State that the children of these 60,000 or 70,000 people should be brought up in ignorance and vice? I confess I cannot conceive a more urgent case, not so far merely as the intellectual advantage of the Roman Catholics is concerned; but if there be any virtue in our principle—if the true remedy against barbarism and crime and degradation of character is instruction—it is not for the advantage of the Protestant community that these Roman Catholic children should remain immersed in ignorance.'

A few months afterwards, another question arose which put Sir Robert Peel's liberal equity in regard to religious creeds again to the test. On the 11th of December, 1847, on the occasion of the election of Baron Lionel de Rothschild as one of the four representatives of the City of London, Lord John Russell proposed to relieve the Jews from the political disability which denied them admission into Parliament. Sir Robert Peel frankly supported the motion: 'It was with great reluctance,' he said, 'that I gave a silent vote on the first occasion on which this matter was brought under our consideration. . . . . I now

wish to state the grounds on which I have come to a conclusion which is at variance certainly with first impressions, and which places me in painful collision with many with whom I have almost invariably acted—with some from whom I never, to the best of my recollection, on any former subject of equal importance, have had the pain to differ. I must, in the first place, disclaim altogether any concurrence in the doctrine that to us, in our legislative capacity, religion is a matter of indifference. I am deeply impressed with the conviction that it is our paramount duty to promote the interests of religion, and its influence on the human mind. I am impressed by a conviction that the spirit and precepts of Christianity ought to influence our deliberations; nay more, that if our legislation be at variance with the precepts and spirit of Christianity, we cannot expect the blessing of God upon them. I may, indeed, say with truth, that whether my decision on this question be right or wrong, it is influenced much less by considerations of political expediency than by a deep sense of religious obligation. Between the tenets of the Jew and of the Christian, there is, in my opinion, a vital difference; I do not consider that the concurrence of the Jew with the Christian in recognising the historical truths and divine origin of the moral precepts of the Old Testament, can avail to reconcile their difference in respect to those doctrines which constitute the vital principle and foundation of Christianity. If, as a Legislature, we had authority to determine religious error and a commission to punish

religious error, it might be our painful duty to punish the Jews. But we have no such commission. If the Jews did commit an inexpiable crime, nearly two thousand years ago, we have had no authority given to us—even if we could determine who were the descendants of the persons guilty of that crime—to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, not unto the third or fourth, but unto the three-hundredth or four-hundredth generation. That awful power is not ours. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."'

How was it that a man thus deeply imbued with the great moral reasons upon which the separation of civil concerns from religious beliefs is based, had waited so long to see this light? How was it that he had been so long the defender, the sincere and earnest defender, of the contrary principle? This would be a strange phenomenon if it were not the consequence of a frequent and simple fact; the first ideas which a man receives, the circumstances which habitually surround him, the atmosphere in which he lives, rule his mind as well as his life, and the element of truth which they contain, may so far suffice him that his eyes remain shut to every opposite idea, or if he has a glimpse of one, he defends himself against it as against a crime or a danger. A pious London clergyman, almost a contemporary of Sir Robert Peel, almost equally distinguished for intellect and for virtue, and zealously devoted to the abolition of the slave trade, the Rev. John Newton, had himself been long engaged in that trade, without suspecting the wicked-

ness of the traffic. In order to become liberal towards the Catholics and the Jews, Sir Robert Peel had not to undergo a similar transformation; but his own change of opinion was neither less natural nor less sincere; he thought of things of which he had not thought before; he looked at facts at which he had not previously looked; he experienced feelings which he had not hitherto known. But for the grandeur of the part he played, and the importance of his actions, no one would think of feeling astonished at his moral vicissitudes,—the common history of so many human minds.

Among the various questions of home administration in which Sir Robert Peel took part, when free from the burden of affairs, and able to choose at his pleasure the objects as well as the days on which to exercise his activity, I shall mention only one, the greatest of them all, and also the one in which he interfered with the most originality and effect—I mean the reform which, in changing the condition of landed property, has changed the social condition of Ireland. Ireland weighed on the mind of Sir Robert Peel like a nightmare—not only her actual and accidental sufferings, but her ancient and permanent state, the principal cause of her sufferings. Three years' continuance of the potato disease had starved the population; the poor law had been imposed on landed property, and landed property, crushed with debt, destitute of capital, blasted with sterility, was falling into a condition of impotence and ruin. What was to become of this people, who daily became more numerous and more

wretched? What was to become of England, laden with this burden, which was ever increasing, and ever on the point of ending in a great danger. 'It is in vain for England,' said Peel, on the 30th of March, 1849, 'to hope that by indifference or neglect she can free herself from the burden, if there be no remedy for Irish distress and disorder, which will press upon her with intense force. At the moment at which I am speaking, you have a military force of not less than 47,000 men in Ireland; and the whole of the charge for that force is borne, not locally by Ireland, but by the Imperial Treasury. Now with that military force, and with coercive laws, what is the social condition of Ireland? I have here an account of the last assizes at Clonmel; "for one division only of the county o. Tipperary, and that the most quiet one, there are no less than 279 persons for trial, and of these 18 are charged with arson, 4 with attacking a police-barrack in arms, 3 with burglary, 4 with conspiracy to murder, 42 with treasonable practices, 14 with highway robbery, 21 with murder, and 14 with shooting with intent to murder. The prison, which has only 225 cells, has in it no less than 668 persons, including 20 already under sentence of transportation. No wonder that Judge Jackson designated the calendar as one of the most awful he had ever known." . . . Have I not stated enough to recommend to the consideration of this portion of the empire, the social condition of Ireland? . . . To mitigate her sufferings, to lay the foundation for a better state of things, measures of no commonplace and ordinary character are requi-

site. . . . Reject my proposal if you will, but propose some other. If you can propose a better, there is no man in this House who will give it a more cordial support than I shall. I make this proposal without adventitious party aid. I know not who agrees with or who differs from me. I make it solely under the influence of sympathy for an unfortunate country, and with the conviction that some decisive measure is necessary for the relief, not only of Ireland, but of this country also.'

Sir Robert Peel's propositions bore upon two points —emigration, and the state of landed property in Ireland. With regard to emigration, one of his young and most intimate adherents, Lord Lincoln, had already, on the 1st of June, 1847, brought forward a motion on the subject, demanding that the Government should take measures to induce and assist the superabundant and wretched peasants of Ireland to remove to the English colonies. Peel supported the motion, but with reserve, and with a most evident appreciation of the difficulties of such an operation. When he returned to the subject on his own account in 1849, he still retained the same scruples, suggesting doubts as to the good results of a system of Government emigration, dwelling on the enormous expense it would involve, approving of what the ministry were already doing to encourage voluntary emigration, which was going on at a rapid rate, and exhorting them to develop their measures in this direction rather than to adopt more direct and vaster schemes. It was to the state of landed property in Ireland

that Sir Robert Peel chiefly directed his efforts: after having drawn a lively picture of its deplorable condition, its public burdens, its private debts, the new Poor Law, the accumulation of mortgages, the apathy of landlords, the barren congestion of tenants, he went on to say: 'It is not without hesitation I venture to offer any suggestion for diminishing the danger which I see in perspective; but I will communicate to the House what my impressions are. Almost the only measure from which I derive a hope of safety, is the introduction of new proprietors, who shall take possession of land in Ireland, freed from its present incumbrances, and enter upon its cultivation with adequate capital, with new feelings, and inspired by new hopes.' He then referred to what had taken place in Ulster, in the north of Ireland, during the reign of James I., when, after several rebellions of the Irish chieftains, the king, finding that confiscations had placed two millions of acres of land at his disposal, granted the greater part of it to English and Scottish Protestants, who had settled there with their families, and established the prosperity of the province by intelligent and active cultivation. 'Nothing can be easier,' said Sir Robert 'than to suggest remedies, if we choose to disregard those rights of property which it is the first duty of a British legislature to uphold. But if it be possible to make any new settlement similar to that of Ulster, my earnest advice—my advice in unison with the universal feelings of the House—would be that no religious distinction should be allowed to enter into the arrange-

ment. . . . If, without violating the rights of property, you can place the land in possession of new proprietors, without distinction of religious profession, you will lay the foundation of the future prosperity of Ireland. I much fear that if you rely merely on individual sales and purchases, you will make no great advance. Perhaps it might be prudent to appoint a Commission for the purpose of considering the whole subject, and the possibility of encouraging, by their advice and intervention, that change in property which I believe to be indispensable to any great improvement of the country. Much property in Ireland is, in point of fact, of little value to the proprietors, on account of the incumbrances upon it; and it may be possible for the Government, with the sanction of the House, to devise means by which new capital may be introduced into the cultivation of the land in Ireland, and the existing proprietors rescued from the disappointment and despair in which they are involved.'

When this idea was first suggested, very various opinions were entertained in regard to it both in Parliament and among the public. Several learned lawyers, and among others the Whig Chancellor, Lord Cottenham, made not merely many objections, but a strong resistance, to its adoption: independently of the legal difficulties of the proposed scheme, it could not possibly succeed unless its execution were intrusted to special commissioners, who would deprive the Court of Chancery of some of its most important administrative functions; and this Sir Robert Peel

formally demanded. Lord John Russell, though expressing himself with much esteem and respect for Sir Robert's plan, raised doubts about it, and exhibited but little readiness to carry it into effect. The old Irish party protested vehemently against it; it involved, they said, a fresh confiscation of the soil of Ireland; it depreciated the value of existing property; it taxed the landowners with apathy or ill-will, stupidity or impotence; it was a scheme for banishing them either to Connaught or to hell; it was the expulsion of the Catholic nobility, both great and small, from Ireland. Peel pointed out, with all the energy of sincerity and conviction, the unreasonableness of these apprehensions of a blind patriotism, and did his utmost to remove the doubts and overcome the hesitation of the Government. Both in England and in Ireland, nearly all the men who were conversant with the principles of political economy warmly supported his proposition; the public welcomed it with that favour and those hopes which attend a great idea when presented by a superior man, who is evidently influenced by no interest, and aims at no object, but the public good. Sir Robert Peel entered patiently into the examination of details, discussed the objections of the lawyers with modest but persevering firmness, and pointed out the connection of his proposition with an Act which Parliament had passed in 1848 for the purpose of facilitating the sale of encumbered estates. Lord Clarendon, who was then Viceroy of Ireland, sagaciously foreseeing the good results of the measure, zealously employed himself to combat the

prejudices, and to remove the obstacles, that stood in its way. The plan was finally adopted in April, 1849, not merely in principle and as an experiment, but under the conditions and with the means of execution which Peel considered necessary to insure its success. A year had scarcely elapsed before Sir Robert Peel had ceased to live, and yet the success of his scheme already surpassed his own expectations. He had entered public life in Ireland, and in the service of the party most opposed to Irish reforms: Ireland had been, to use his own expression, his chief difficulty; Ireland had twice, in 1835 and in 1846, cost him his position as head of the Government. Yet to him Ireland owed the emancipation of the Catholics; and the most effectual measure ever adopted for the social regeneration of Ireland was the last great act of Sir Robert Peel's influence on the internal government of his country. There are times when God specially baffles the foresight of men, and makes them execute His designs by leading them from one inconsistency to another, in their thoughts and combinations.

CHAPTER XVI.

Abolition of the Republic of Cracow.—Discussion in the House of Commons. —Language held by the Author wrongly interpreted by Sir Robert Peel. —The Spanish Marriages.—Differences between the French and English Governments.—Altered position of Spain.—Solicitude of King Louis Philippe to preserve the good understanding between France and England.—Declaration of the English Government on the Spanish Marriages' question.—The Revolution of February 1848.—Exile of the Author.—Kind reception in England.—Visit to Drayton Manor.—Sir Robert Peel places Drayton Manor at the service of King Louis Philippe.—Visit of King Louis Philippe to Drayton Manor.—Dinner to Sir Robert Peel at the Mansion-House.—Debate on the Foreign Policy of Lord Palmerston. —Vote of Censure in the House of Lords.—Debate in the House of Commons.—Speech of Sir Robert Peel.—Government obtain a majority in the House of Commons.

As head of the Cabinet, Sir Robert Peel had been obliged to treat questions of foreign policy, in the House of Commons, on behalf of Lord Aberdeen, who was necessarily absent from that assembly; on his retirement from office, he might have dispensed with doing so; but he did not adopt this course, and was almost always ready, when questions of this nature presented themselves, to express his opinion on them, generally in support of his successors. This was the readiness of a good Englishman and an honest man, determined to support the Government of his country abroad, even to the advantage of his adversaries,—faithful at the same time to the general spirit of justice and European peace which had presided over the foreign policy of his own administration,—but frequently bringing into affairs of this kind, neither

precise views, nor a profound appreciation of facts, nor complete freedom from the prejudices of the moment, nor a sufficiently exact and measured language. I will give only one example of this, and I select it in order to re-establish, in their truth, certain ideas and words which Sir Robert Peel assuredly contested only because he had carelessly read and imperfectly understood them.

It was in regard to the little Republic of Cracow, founded by the Treaty of Vienna, in 1815, invaded and abolished in 1846 by Austria, Prussia, and Russia. France and England, it will be remembered, alike protested, though separately, against this infraction of a treaty which had been concluded with their participation, and which could not be legitimately modified without their concurrence. On the 4th of March, 1847, Mr. Hume demanded of the House of Commons something more than this mere protest; he proposed that, in return for the act of violence which the three Powers of the North had accomplished, the English Government should hold itself discharged from a pecuniary obligation which, in consequence of the same Treaty of Vienna, England had contracted towards Russia, and of which a sum of 3,917,187*l.* still remained to be paid. While again protesting against the violation of the treaty, Lord John Russell refused, and with reason, to reply to it by another breach of faith of a similar but subaltern character; and Sir Robert Peel supported the Cabinet alike in its protest and in its resistance. 'I am the more anxious,' he said, 'that we should equitably and honourably fulfil

our engagements, because I differ from the language which has been held by the Minister of France as to the effect of the recent transactions between the three Great Powers. M. Guizot says, in enforcing his protest against their acts, "No Power can free itself from those treaties without at the same time freeing others. France has not given the example of such an attempt on the policy of Conservatism and peace. France has not forgotten what painful sacrifices were imposed on her by the treaties of 1815. *France must rejoice at the opportunity now afforded her to consult nothing but a provident estimate of her own interests.*" Sir, I protest against the conduct of the three Powers, and I protest also against the doctrines of the Minister of France. I cannot admit that either this country or France is entitled never henceforth to consult "anything but a provident estimate of her own interests." I totally deny that the misdeeds of other Powers, parties to the Treaty of Vienna, justify us, either morally or legally, in violating that treaty; and it is because I believe that, in the present state of Europe, a strict and honourable adherence to treaties is the best foundation of peace, and the best hope of solving any difficulties that the present aspect of affairs may present—it is because I differ from the Minister of France as to the right of any Power to cancel its own obligations by following the example against which it protests—it is on these grounds I feel deeply anxious that our own language should be unequivocal and our own course clear, and that, if we stand alone, we shall set an honourable example in

the face of Europe, of a strict adherence to the obligation of treaties.'

If Sir Robert Peel had done three very simple things—if he had clearly understood my words, if he had quoted them completely, and if he had consulted the commentary which I had myself given upon them two months previously, when treating of this question in the Chamber of Deputies, he would have saved himself an error of fact, an act of moral injustice, and a mark of but little political sagacity in such matters. In my protest against the destruction of the Republic of Cracow, I said, not—'France *must rejoice* at the opportunity now afforded her to consult nothing but a provident estimate of her own interests'—but—'France *might rejoice* at an act which *might* authorize her, by a just reciprocity, henceforth to consult only a provident estimate of her own interests:[1] and it is France who recalls to a faithful observance of these treaties, the Powers which have reaped the chief advantage from them! It is France who is anxious above all things that acquired rights shall be maintained, and that the independence of States shall be respected!'

And, on the 3rd of February, 1847, when explaining and discussing our policy in this affair, I said:—'His Majesty's Government has seen, in the destruction of the Republic of Cracow, a violation of European law; it has entered its protest against this act, which

[1] The original words are: 'La France pourrait se réjouir d'un acte qui l'autoriserait, par une juste réciprocité, a ne consulter désormais que le calcul prévoyant de ses intérêts.'

it has designated in terms expressive of its opinion. It has officially notified this in order that in future, if occasion should arise, France might take such account of it as her legitimate and well-understood interests might advise. . . . But at the same time that it protested, His Majesty's Government did not consider the event at Cracow a *casus belli*. We did not think that the moment at which we were protesting against the infraction of treaties was the moment for proclaiming contempt for treaties: we did not think that it was befitting the morality of France, befitting the morality of her Government, to say at the very moment when we were raising our voice against a violation of treaties — "We will recognise no more treaties!" . . . We do not think that the infraction of the Treaty of Vienna, in regard to Cracow, is a sufficient motive for France to proclaim that she considers herself liberated from the obligations of that treaty, and that it now depends only on her will whether she will pay any further regard to it. . . . We do not think that the public law of Europe is abolished between us and the three Powers in question, and, for our part, we are resolved to observe it loyally.'

It is unnecessary for me to add more: the quotations I have made are sufficient. Evidently, while making for the future all the reservations suggested, I might even say, commanded by the elementary maxims of international law, I had taken every precaution for the maintenance of European order, and I had made, with regard to the meaning and bearing

of our protest, all the declarations that could be desired by the most scrupulous guardian of the faith of treaties and of peace. Evidently also Sir Robert Peel had no intention to translate incorrectly, or to mutilate, or to misinterpret what I had said: but his mind was filled with one idea, and that idea was neither sufficient to form a just appreciation of the event, nor to guide the conduct of the Governments which were called upon to give judgment upon it. Sir Robert did not always, in such matters, take proper account of all the circumstances of the fact, or of all the chances of the future, and assign to them all their due place and part in his language as well as in his mind. This tactician who, in his Parliamentary life, was so attentive and provident, was, in questions of foreign policy, always sensible and honest, but sometimes vague, superficial, aud commonplace.

In regard to an affair much more serious than that of Cracow, indeed the most serious that has arisen in our days between France and England—the Spanish marriages, I find no other public statement of Sir Robert Peel than this, which he made in the debate on the Address in the House of Commons in January, 1847: 'I shall abstain from any other reference to this matter,' he said, 'except to confirm entirely the statement that, during the time the late Government were in office, no effort was made on the part of England to bring forward a Prince of Coburg as a candidate for the hand of the Queen of Spain.' A remarkable instance of intelligent reserve! Not having a clear insight into the question of the Spanish marriages,

Sir Robert Peel would not take any part in the debate; but he took care to free his own administration from all responsibility with regard to the candidature of a Prince of Coburg, that is to say, with regard to the cause which had occasioned the particular solution which the question had received.

I do not doubt that, beneath this reserve, Sir Robert Peel then shared in the impressions of distrust and ill-humour against the Government of King Louis Philippe, to which the conclusion of the Spanish marriages had given rise in England. It was a very manifest defeat of English policy—but a defeat more apparent than important, for the causes which, during a hundred and fifty years, had led England to contend obstinately against France in Spain, no longer existed. Spain, which had fallen from her high place in Europe, which had been expelled from America, which was alternately a prey to apathetic despotism or revolutionary distractions, could no longer be a powerful ally to France, or a cause of great danger to England. The various parties, Monarchists and Liberals, Moderados and Progresistas, which England and France respectively patronized, contended for the Government without ever securely establishing it, and were far less a source of strength than of embarrassment to their patrons. The Spanish monarchy, restored by England in 1814, by France in 1823, and sustained in its perplexities by one or other of the two Powers in turn, according as one or other of the Spanish parties had the predominance in the Government, had come to no strong resolution, and felt no

firm attachment, with regard to either of its liberators. In the midst of revolutionary perturbations or constitutional changes, the personal ties or tastes of the reigning family ceased to govern the policy of the country. In 1814, England had demanded, as the reward for her services to King Ferdinand VII., whom she had replaced on his throne, that he should enter into a formal engagement never to re-establish the family compact between the Bourbons of France and the Bourbons of Spain. England might have saved herself this trouble, circumstances had settled the matter for her; the family compact, the intimacy between the two Crowns, the active union of the two Governments, all the Franco-Spanish policy of the eighteenth century, was then nothing more than history—a tradition which still retained its importance to France, as a pledge of security on that frontier, but from which, as an offensive force, she had nothing great to expect, and England had nothing serious to apprehend.

But neither nations nor even Governments themselves perceive soon enough these transformations of the world; they are far more influenced by memory and imagination than enlightened by observation; the past casts its mighty shadows over their minds, and they waste their strength in the pursuit or avoidance of phantoms, instead of acting in accordance with real and positive facts. I have more than once caught myself in the very act of committing such an anachronism, and attaching to certain things, whether as matters to be desired or feared, an importance

which they had ceased to possess. I foresaw that the same feeling on the part of England would lead to some grave embarrassment in our relations with her in regard to Spain. The solicitude of King Louis Philippe in this respect was even greater than my own. I now repeat it without the slightest hesitation, and I may add, without the slightest interest—the policy of a good understanding between France and England never had, and never will have, among the sovereigns of France, a more conscientious, a more sincere, or a more persevering defender. We often conferred on the precautions to be taken in order to avoid everything that might, without any real and national necessity, occasion any breach of this good understanding. In regard to the marriage of the Queen of Spain more particularly, the King had, as soon as the question arose, given proof of his disinterestedness and candour; he had declared that he would neither seek nor consent to her union with any one of the Princes his sons, and with reference to the Infanta, that he would not seek her hand for the Duke de Montpensier until the Queen were married and had issue; but another equally positive declaration was connected with this, namely, that if the marriage of the Queen of Spain or of her sister the Infanta with some prince not of the blood of Philip V. were to become probable and imminent, we should hold ourselves free from all engagement, and at liberty to act immediately in order to ward off the blow, by demanding the hand either of the Queen or of the Infanta for the Duke de Montpensier. The whole history of the

Spanish marriages is contained in these two declarations, both of which were made openly and long before the time had come for carrying them into execution.[1]

[1] I here subjoin two documents which, among many others, contain these two declarations in the clearest and precisest terms.

On the 13th of May, 1843, I wrote to the Count de Ste. Aulaire :—

'Sir Robert Peel, expressing "the opinion of Her Majesty's Government," stated to the House of Commons, on the 5th of this month, that "they considered that Spain was entitled to every right and privilege which belongs to an independent State, and that the Spanish nation, speaking through its regularly-constituted authorities, were the exclusive judges of what alliance should be formed by their sovereign."

'What is the import of this declaration? Does it really say all that it seems to say? Does it signify that, whatever may be the matrimonial alliance that the Queen and the Legislature of Spain may think proper to contract, even should it be with a French prince, the English Government will not interfere, and will not consider itself entitled to oppose it?

'If this is actually Sir Robert Peel's intention, we have nothing to say, and his words, taken in this sense and with this construction, would, perhaps, greatly simplify the position of Spain and our own position also.

'But if Sir Robert, while proclaiming the complete independence of Spain in respect to the choice of a husband for the Queen, nevertheless persists in reality in excluding the French princes from this choice, and in maintaining that England would have a right to oppose, and would actually oppose, such a selection, the greater the respect I entertain for Sir Robert Peel, his character and words, the more I feel myself entitled to be astonished.

'From the first moment that I took part in this question of the marriage of the Queen of Spain, I have made it my duty to bring the most entire frankness into all that I might do or say on the subject. I was aware of the prejudices and mistrusts that I should meet with on my road. I was desirous at once to remove all pretext for either. We have been told, I said, that England excluded our princes from the chances of marriage to Queen Isabella. We replied by excluding in our turn all princes not of the blood of Bourbon. I am not at this moment discussing either declaration. Ours was made by the same right as that of England, and is based on motives of the same nature.

'In bringing it to the knowledge of the great European powers, in stating it at the tribune of our Chambers, I did an act of loyalty towards Spain, towards England, towards Europe. I wished that every one everywhere should know beforehand, and clearly, what would be the policy of France in this great question.

'In reality, and every sensible man has only to reflect for a moment in order to be convinced of this, we did not thereby make any attack on the independence of Spain. The Spanish nation, their Queen, their Govern-

We did nothing to hasten the advent of that period. We acceded to every combination that could present itself within the circle of the descendants of Philip V.,

ment, their Cortes, are perfectly free to do whatever they may please about this question of marriage; but States, like individuals, are free only at their risk and peril, and their will cannot bind that of their neighbours, who, in their turn, are also free to act in accordance with their own interests. To state beforehand, and openly, what attitude one will take, what conduct one will pursue, if such and such an event occurs in a neighbouring country, is imprudence, unless one is firmly resolved actually to adopt that attitude and course of conduct; but if one is so resolved, it is loyalty to avow it.'

On the 27th of February, 1846, I addressed to the Count de Ste. Aulaire the following memorandum, which he communicated to Lord Aberdeen on the 4th of March.

'I. The principle which we have maintained, and which the English Cabinet has accepted as the basis of our policy with regard to the marriage of the Queen of Spain, is becoming very difficult and uncertain of application. This is at present the position of the princes who are descended from Philip V., and who aspire or may aspire to the hand of the Spanish Queen:—

'The Prince of Lucca is married.

'The Count de Trapani is greatly compromised: first, by the outbreak that has occurred against him; secondly, by the fall of General Narvaez.

'The sons of Don Francisco de Paula are greatly compromised: first, by their own false steps; secondly, by their intimacy with the Radical party, and the antipathy with which they are regarded by the Moderate party; thirdly, by the ill-will of the Queen-mother and of the young Queen herself.

'The sons of Don Carlos are, for the present at least, impossible: first, on account of the openly-proclaimed opposition of all parties; secondly, on account of their formally-declared exclusion in the Constitution; thirdly, on account of their own tendencies, which have always been far remote from the conduct which alone could give them some chance.

'The actual position of the descendants of Philip V. in the question of the marriage of the Queen of Spain has therefore become bad.

'II. I might say much on the causes of this circumstance; I will, however, refer only to two points.

'1. We have constantly manifested favourable dispositions towards all the descendants of Philip V. without exception. We have said over and over again to Queen Christina herself, that the Infantes, sons of Don Francisco de Paula, suited us very well. We have done what was in our power to render possible the Infantes, sons of Don Carlos. If we have specially seconded the Count de Trapani, it has been because his success appeared to us more probable than that of any other candidate, on account of the good-will of Queen Christina and of the young Queen towards him.

without excluding any one. We did not press the solution of the question. Even in 1846, we would willingly have postponed it, in order also to postpone the

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'2. The English Cabinet has lent us no active and efficient co-operation in respect of the Count de Trapani. It has maintained a cold neutrality, and its inertia has left free course to all the hostilities, and all the intrigues, both of the Spaniards, and also of the inferior English agents, whom its open and active concurrence would have restrained.

'III. Whatever may be its causes, the fact that the difficulties of the marriage of Queen Isabella to one of the descendants of Philip V. have increased is indisputable.

'And at the same time very active efforts are being made, and at this moment with redoubled vigour, to marry Prince Leopold of Coburg either to Queen Isabella or to the Infanta Dona Fernanda.

'The Court of Lisbon is the seat of this intrigue. The Spanish and Portuguese newspapers and correspondence clearly reveal it.

'It is affirmed that Prince Leopold of Coburg, who was to have left Lisbon on the 24th of February for Cadiz, Gibraltar, Algiers, Malta, and Italy, will, either secretly or publicly, pay a visit to Madrid. Many circumstances render this statement credible.

'IV. We have been, and we wish to continue, very faithful to the policy which we have adopted, and to the engagements into which we have entered, with regard to the marriage both of Queen Isabella and of the Infanta Dona Fernanda.

'But if the present state of things is prolonged and developed, we may suddenly find ourselves in a position in which we shall be:—

'1. Placed under the pressure of an absolute necessity to act in order to prevent our policy from receiving in Spain, by the marriage of either the Queen or the Infanta, a check to which we could not submit.

'2. Free from all engagements in regard to both marriages.

'This is what would occur if the marriage either of the Queen, or of the Infanta, with Prince Leopold of Coburg, or with any other Prince not of the blood of Philip V., were to become probable or imminent.

'In that case, we should be liberated from all engagements, and free to act immediately to ward off the blow, by demanding the hand either of the Queen, or of the Infanta, for the Duke de Montpensier.

'V. We sincerely and earnestly desire that matters may not come to this extremity.

'We see only one means of preventing it, and that is, that the English Cabinet should unite actively with us,

'1. To set again afloat one of the descendants of Philip V., no matter whom, the Duke of Seville, or the Duke of Cadiz, as well as the Count of Trapani, and to prepare the way for his marriage with Queen Isabella.

'2. To prevent meanwhile the marriage of the Infanta, either with

complications which we saw would inevitably arise from it; but the whole Spanish Government, the Cabinet, the Queen-mother, the Cortes, would not allow any further postponement; it was their firm determination to have for the marriage of Queen Isabella, as it was stated, a powerful patron, either France or England, and to compel both those countries to desist from tergiversation and delay. 'The Court has expressed to me,' wrote Sir Henry Bulwer to Lord Aberdeen, on the 12th of July, 1846, 'the necessity of the marriage question being settled without more loss of time, and expects an answer.' When this letter reached London, Lord Aberdeen had ceased to be Foreign Secretary; and as early as the 19th of July, his successor, Lord Palmerston, directed Sir Henry Bulwer to state to the Court of Madrid: 'The candidates for the hand of the Queen of Spain are now reduced to three, namely, the Prince Leopold of Saxe Coburg, and the two sons of Don Francisco de Paula. . . . . As between the three candidates above-mentioned, Her Majesty's Government have only to express their sincere wish that the choice may fall upon the one who may be most likely to secure the happiness of the Queen, and to promote the welfare of the Spanish nation.' It is said that the English Government, in holding this language, had no intention to promote the marriage of

Prince Leopold of Coburg, or with any other prince not descended from Philip V.

'We think that, by the common and decided action of the two Cabinets, this twofold object may be attained. And we consider it a duty of loyalty to give notice to the English Cabinet that, otherwise, we might find ourselves forced and free to act as I have just indicated.'

Prince Leopold of Saxe Coburg with Queen Isabella. I am ready to admit it; but intentions are of little importance in politics; effects are everything; and it was impossible but that, on receiving communication of this despatch, the Spanish Government, resolved as it was to marry Queen Isabella, would hold itself assured that, if we rejected the simultaneous marriage which it proposed to us for the Queen and the Infanta her sister, the marriage of the Queen with the Prince of Coburg would not only not meet with any objection on the part of the English Government, but would have its approval. Under the influence of these combined circumstances, therefore, and whether the English Government desired it or not, this marriage evidently became, in case of refusal on our part, both probable and imminent. I was of this opinion, and I still remain convinced that I was entitled to think so. I hesitated no longer. I advised the King, and instructed Count Bresson, his ambassador at Madrid, to press for the immediate conclusion of the double marriage of the Queen of Spain with the Infante Don Francisco d'Assisi, and of the Infanta with the Duke de Montpensier. I thoroughly despise, and have never attempted to practise, that species of cleverness which enables the victor to smile at the surprise of the vanquished; but I have no greater affection for dupery than for trickery, and of all weaknesses in great affairs, improvident indecision is, in my opinion, the worst. French policy, national as well as royal, required that the throne of Spain should not pass from the House of Bourbon. I had openly laid down this principle. I

secured its triumph when it was on the point of defeat. English policy considered itself injured by my conduct; but there is not, I am sure, an English gentleman who, in his heart, does not approve of what I did, and who, if he had been placed in the same position, would not have acted as I did.

Eighteen months after the conclusion of this affair, the Revolution of February, 1848, had broken out. I was proscribed, and had taken refuge in England. It has sometimes been said that the Spanish marriages, and the ill-humour which the English Government had felt on their account, were not without their influence in this catastrophe. This is a frivolous mistake with regard to its nature and causes; they were altogether internal. It was a social and moral crisis—an earthquake, French at first, and afterwards European, but with which the external relations of States and their Governments had nothing to do. However this may be, on my retirement to England, I might have forgotten, if I had wished, that lately I had been an actor in a great political disagreement between my own country and the country which afforded me an asylum. I have lived twice in England, first as the ambassador of a powerful monarch, afterwards when proscribed by a terrible revolution; I received on both occasions the same welcome, except that it was more earnest and friendly in the days of my adversity than in the days of my high fortune. It is a noble country, full of men of upright minds and generous hearts, who know how to honour, even when they oppose, and who are always brought back by gene-

rosity to justice! In Sir Robert Peel, both with regard to general politics, and to myself personally, I found the same sentiments as before, mingled however with some reserve upon questions which we were both of us but little inclined to approach. He was particularly, and with reason, anxious regarding the position of England with respect to France, and desirous that the two countries might continue, not only at peace, but on good terms with one another. Our impressions, moreover, with regard to the Revolution of February, though very near akin, did not fully coincide; he was more struck than offended by the event, and saw its proximate and apparent causes rather than those which lay deeper and further off. My feeling could not be, and was not, the same; but these were diversities rather than disagreements between us, and did not interfere with the general conformity of our views. In the autumn of 1848, he invited me to spend some days at his residence, Drayton Manor, and I retain the most pleasurable recollections of this visit, which I enjoyed with two of my friends, M. Dumon and the Duke de Montebello. I there saw Sir Robert Peel in the bosom of his family, and in the midst of the population of his estates: Lady Peel, still beautiful, passionately and modestly devoted to her husband; a charming daughter, since married to a son of Lord Camoys; three sons, one a captain in the navy, already renowned for the most brilliant courage, the second, who had just made a successful *début* in the House of Commons, the third still engaged in his studies; on the estate, numerous and prosperous far

mers, among whom was one of Sir Robert's brothers, who had preferred an agricultural life to any other career; great works of rural improvement, and more particularly of drainage, in progress, which Sir Robert Peel watched closely and explained to us with an accurate knowledge of details. Altogether, a beautiful domestic existence, grand and simple, and broadly active: in the interior of the house, an affectionate gravity, less animated, less expansive, and less easy than our manners desire or permit; political recollections perpetuated in a gallery of portraits, most of them of contemporaries, some Sir Robert Peel's colleagues in Government, others distinguished men with whom he had been brought in contact. Out of doors, between the landlord and the surrounding population, a great distance, strongly marked in manners, but filled up by frequent relations, full of equity and benevolence on the part of the superior, without any appearance of envy or servility on the part of the inferiors. I there beheld one of the happiest examples of the legitimate hierarchy of positions and persons, without any aristocratic recollections or pretensions, and amid a general and mutual feeling of right and respect.

Like Lord Aberdeen, and with due regard to the political proprieties which he was obliged to observe, Sir Robert Peel had hastened to express his respectful sympathy to King Louis Philippe and the royal family, when they took up their abode at Claremont. As events grew more distant, he felt himself at greater liberty in this respect, and he soon found an opportu-

nity of showing it. Towards the end of the summer of 1849, Queen Marie-Amélie fell ill; it was thought that her residence at Claremont was not conducive to her health. Sir Robert Peel wrote to the King to place Drayton Manor at his disposal, and to say how happy he should be if the Queen could like his house. Deeply touched by this offer, though he did not accept it, the King expressed his intention to go to Drayton in person to convey his thanks to Sir Robert. On the 18th of December, 1849, he carried his intention into effect; Sir Robert Peel and Lord Aberdeen met him at the railway station in London; the Duke d'Aumale accompanied him. At Drayton they found assembled Sir Robert's family and a few chosen friends, among whom were Lord and Lady Mahon, now Earl and Countess Stanhope. The King went over the house, and visited the picture-gallery. Luncheon was served. Before rising from table, Sir Robert Peel, in thanking the King for the honour he had done him, said: 'Sire, to you we have owed the peace of the world. The chief of a nation, justly jealous and justly proud of her military glory, you succeeded in obtaining the great object of peace without ever sacrificing any interest of France, without ever suffering any infringement of her honour, of which you were more careful than any one else. It is chiefly for the men who have sat in the councils of the British Crown to proclaim this!' The King, visibly affected, replied to his host in English, thanking him for having thus done justice at the same time to his patriotism and to his efforts to maintain the peace of the world—'an easy task,'

he said, 'when at the head of affairs in this country were men such as you, Sir, and my noble friend who is sitting beside me.' It was Lord Aberdeen.

I make no excuse for dwelling on these testimonies of concurrence and respect which the dethroned King Louis Philippe thus received under the roof of a great popular minister who had retired from the political arena. When Sir Robert Peel addressed the King in those words, the ruins of the Chateau of Neuilly were still smoking. History offers no more shocking example of the fits of iniquitous and ungrateful madness which sometimes seize upon a people; and it is a most allowable consolation to honest men to pause a moment to see some sparks of justice appear above the melancholy wreck.

Sir Robert Peel did not reject the opportunities which offered themselves for thus expressing his opinions, both with regard to past events, and respecting the circumstances and questions of the day. On the 27th of June, 1849, Sir James Duke, the Lord Mayor of London, gave him a grand dinner at the Mansion House, and in proposing his health, enumerated the great political measures with which he had connected his name—the Currency, the reform of the Criminal Law, Catholic Emancipation, the revision of the Tariff, the abolition of the Corn Laws, the permanent improvement of the condition of Ireland. During the following autumn, Sir Robert Peel spent some weeks in Scotland, first in one of the most picturesque localities in the county of Ross, and afterwards at Haddo Castle, the residence of Lord Aber-

deen; and on the 12th of October, the Provost and magistrates of Aberdeen, conferred upon him, with all due municipal pomp, the burgess-ticket of their town, which nearly eighty years before, Dr. Johnson had also received as a rare honour. On all these occasions Sir Robert Peel spoke, glancing at the history of his time and of his life, at the state of affairs at home and abroad, at the reforms he had accomplished and the peace he had maintained; enjoying with some complacency, but without any sign of reviving ambition, his great and popular position.

On the 31st January, 1850, Parliament resumed its sittings, and Sir Robert took part in several debates on questions of home administration, particularly in order to defend the servants of the State, both great and small, from the clerks in the Government offices to the Viceroy of Ireland, against that mania for the lowering of duties and the reduction of salaries which attends the progress of the democratic spirit. In the month of June, 1850, a more brilliant debate occurred —a debate on foreign policy, occasioned by the violent measures of Lord Palmerston against Greece, in support of the complaints of two British subjects, Mr. Finlay and Don Pacifico, the one a Scotchman and the other a Gibraltar Jew, who asserted that they had been injured by the Greek Government, and demanded large indemnities from it. A strong disagreement had arisen on this subject between the Cabinets of Paris and of London. The French Minister at Athens, Baron Gros, and the French Ambassador in London, M. Drouyn de Lhuys, had left

their posts. The attack, begun by Lord Stanley in the House of Lords on the 17th of June, was directed not merely to the affairs of Greece but against the entire foreign policy of Lord Palmerston, the spirit in which he acted, and the proceedings which he employed; and it ended in a formal vote of censure, carried, in a more numerously-attended House of Lords than had met for a long time, by 169 votes to 132. Such a defeat required a glorious reparation. One of the most eloquent Radicals, Mr. Roebuck, undertook to ask it of the House of Commons. After having passed in review the history of the time and all the great diplomatic acts of Lord Palmerston, he proposed to the House to declare 'that the principles on which the foreign policy of Her Majesty's Government has been regulated have been such as were calculated to maintain the honour and dignity of this country, and, in times of unexampled difficulty, to preserve peace between England and the various nations of the world.' This was much more than the Greek question required; it involved a general and systematic approbation of Lord Palmerston's entire foreign policy, and not only of his acts but of his principles. Towards the close of the debate, Sir Robert Peel, speaking amid breathless expectation, protested against this demand. After having reminded the House that, since the accession of the Whig Cabinet to power, he had constantly supported it in its home administration, and frequently also in its embarrassments with foreign powers: 'It is stated,' he said, 'that after four years' patient en-

durance, after four years' neutrality and silence, I and others have come forward to condemn the conduct of the Government. So little have I been a party to any combination that I never saw the resolution voted in the other House, until I read it in the newspapers. I knew as little of the concoction, and was concerned as little with the proposal, of this resolution, as the noble Lord against whom it is directed. Sir, I have come forward with no condemnation of the Government. But the honourable and learned gentleman (Mr. Roebuck) demands from me to acquiesce in a declaration of positive approbation; and not only that, but he demands from me the assertion of principles, the consideration of which is tenfold more important than the saving of a ministry can be. . . . . Is it too much to ask the honourable and learned gentleman to define, before he asks me to subscribe to those principles, what they really are. Are they non-intervention? Are they the positive assertion of claims brought forward against a weak government, and the employment of language not held towards the strong and powerful? . . . . The honourable and learned member said that, in 1830, there dawned upon us the certain commencement of a happier era in our foreign policy; and this happier period was the recognition of the dynasty of Orleans on the throne of France. But my noble friend, the Earl of Aberdeen, was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs at that time. . . . . And yet I am asked to express approbation of the foreign policy of the present Government as distinguished from the policy

of its predecessors. The declaration of the noble Lord at the head of the Government (Lord John Russell) has removed all doubts from my mind on this point. He said, upon the first night of this debate, that his noble friend the Secretary for Foreign Affairs would not be the Minister of Austria, would not be the Minister of Russia, would not be the Minister of France, but would be the Minister of England. What was the meaning of that declaration? My construction of it was that the noble Lord meant to contrast the conduct of the noble Lord (Lord Palmerston) with the conduct of the Earl of Aberdeen; and that what he solicited from me by my vote of this night was a decided reflection on the policy of the Earl of Aberdeen—upon the policy for which I myself was responsible. I have been connected with my noble friend the Earl of Aberdeen during the whole period for which he was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. I was connected with him at the period when we announced that we recognised the House of Orleans, and that we were determined to maintain the most friendly relations with France. I remained connected with him until July, 1846, when, on surrendering power at the feet of a majority of this House, I announced the termination of the only difference that remained with the United States, by the adjustment of the affair of Oregon. I do not look back upon my connection with my noble friend with any other feelings than those of cordial satisfaction. I believe there never existed a minister less disposed to make a sacrifice either of the honour

or of the interests of this country, or more sincerely disposed to maintain not only peace, but the most friendly relations with every country with which England had intercourse. I never understood that this House had disapproved of the policy of my noble friend. . . . In justice to ourselves, in justice to the party with whom I then acted, in justice to this House—I could not with honour acquiesce in any covert reflection on the policy of my noble friend—the policy of peace, consistently with our maintenance of the honour of the country. . . . . I am determined to take upon this occasion, the course which I have taken upon every other. I will not evade the difficulty by silence or absence—I will state the grounds upon which I protest against the resolution—the carrying of which, I believe, will give a false impression with respect to the dignity and honour of this country, and will establish a principle which you cannot put into execution without imminent danger to the best interests of the country.'

The effect produced by this speech was very great. Never, since his retirement from office, had Sir Robert Peel spoken on foreign policy with so much development and precision. Mr. Roebuck's motion was nevertheless adopted by 310 votes against 264. It was a question of life or death to the Whig Cabinet, and Sir Robert did not at all desire its downfall. He was too well aware of the incoherence of the elements which at that time combined to form the Opposition: the 'party without leaders,' as the Conservatives, who had Mr. Disraeli for their organ, were

called; the 'leaders without a party,' among whom Sir Robert Peel, Sir James Graham, and Mr. Gladstone, were the chief; and a section of the Radicals, men like Mr. Cobden and Sir William Molesworth, who were avowed partisans of a pacific policy, but who aspired to internal reforms which were absolutely rejected by their momentary allies. If the Whig Cabinet had fallen, the victors would not have been in a position to take its place.

CHAPTER XVII.

Fatal accident to Sir Robert Peel.—General sympathy.—Death of Sir Robert Peel.—Homage paid to him by Lord John Russell.—Proposal of Government for a Public Funeral.—Declined by the Family of Sir Robert Peel.—Testimonies of esteem in the House of Lords.—Tribute paid to his memory by the French Assembly at the instance of M. Dupin.—Funeral of Sir Robert Peel.—The Poor Man's National Monument.—Tribute of Mr. Cobden.

THE debate had lasted through the whole night. When the House rose, day was dawning, Saturday, the 29th of June, 1850, a beautiful summer's day. Sir Robert Peel walked home, satisfied with th success he had achieved, and delighted to breathe the fresh air of the morning beneath the first rays of the rising sun. After having taken a few hours' rest, he went out before noon to attend a meeting of the Commission which had been appointed, under the presidency of Prince Albert, to make the preliminary preparations for the Great Industrial Exhibition of 1851; on that day they were to determine on the site and plan of the Crystal Palace. On his return home, Sir Robert spent the remainder of the morning in his study; and went out on horseback at about five o'clock, attended by a groom, for his usual ride. He went first of all to

Buckingham Palace to inscribe his name in the Queen's visitors'-book; then turning up Constitution Hill, nearly opposite the wicket that opens into the Green Park, he met Miss Ellis, one of Lady Dover's daughters, who was also on horseback. He advanced to greet her; his horse made some resistance; it was an eight years' old horse, which Sir Robert had been riding for about two months. He was gently quieting the animal, when it suddenly shied again, and threw him over its head. He fell violently, with his face to the ground. Two persons who happened to be passing, lifted him up immediately; a physician from Glasgow, Dr. Foucart, who was also near at hand, came up, and asked him if he were hurt. 'Yes, very much,' replied Sir Robert, with a deep groan, and before a carriage could be procured, he fainted. Mrs. Lucas, who was passing, offered her carriage; Sir Robert was placed in it; he recovered his senses, and said, 'I feel better.' The carriage proceeded slowly through the Park to his residence in Whitehall Gardens; the two persons who had lifted him up, and Dr. Foucart, accompanied him; on their way they met the Queen's physician, Sir James Clark, who had heard of the accident, and hastened to offer his services. When Sir James entered the carriage, Sir Robert Peel fell into a state of great agitation; he attempted to rise and get out; they were obliged to restrain him, and he sank again into a half-fainting condition. When he reached his own door, he resumed his full consciousness, and walked into the house without assistance. Lady Peel, and several members of his family,

who had received information of what had occurred, were waiting for him in the hall with the utmost anxiety. The meeting greatly affected and overcame Sir Robert. He fainted again in the arms of Dr. Foucart. He was carried into the nearest room, the dining-room, and laid on a sofa. He never left that room alive, and all movement became so painful to him, that it was with the greatest difficulty he was removed from the sofa to an hydraulic bed, on which he lay in restless agony.

The most distinguished physicians and surgeons were immediately summoned, and hastened to give their assistance; among others, Sir Benjamin Brodie, whom there was some difficulty in finding: but when they wished closely to investigate the condition of the patient, they encountered a difficulty as unexpected as it was distressing. Naturally, and even when in health, Sir Robert Peel's nervous susceptibility was extreme, and latterly it had increased to such a degree that, notwithstanding his keen love and long practice of field sports, he had almost given up shooting, because of his dislike of the shock which the discharge of his own gun caused him. All physical pain troubled and agitated him strangely. After his fall, this disturbance, agitation, and aversion to pain, became so strong, that his physicians were unable to succeed in clearly ascertaining all the effects of the accident, and the full extent of the injury. Sir Robert objected to any examination, to any sort of contact; and fell into a state of alarming irritation when his medical attendants insisted. It was found that he had sustained a

fracture of the collar-bone, and preparations were made for reducing it; but the operation was not completed on account of the anguish of the sufferer, and after a few hours, he asked so earnestly to have the bandages removed, that it was thought better not to refuse his request. He thus remained with scarcely any surgical treatment, left to the natural consequences of the accident; and human science was more timid and powerless in the case of the greatest minister of England, than it would have been in the case of the poorest and humblest of her inhabitants. It was not until after the death of Sir Robert Peel, that it was discovered that the fifth rib on the left side was also fractured, and had pressed upon the lung, and produced a congestion of that organ which, it is said, was the determining cause of his death.

As soon as the news of the accident became known, the liveliest and most universal interest was displayed; great and small, Court and people, Prince Albert, the Prince of Prussia, the Duke of Cambridge—all the important personages in England came constantly to Whitehall Gardens to inquire after Sir Robert's health, and they found assembled around the house a multitude of persons of all ranks—tradesmen, labourers, men, women, children in their mothers' arms, poor people who wished also to know what they had to hope or fear for the life of the man who had freed their bread from all taxation. The afflux of carriages became so great, that it was necessary to stop them at a distance, for fear their noise might incommode the sufferer; and the number of persons on foot, waiting

for news, was so large, that copies of the bulletins respecting his condition were distributed among the police, who were directed to read them aloud to the people.

Sir Robert Peel's state rapidly grew worse. His excitement became so intense, that it was necessary to exclude his wife and children from his room, as their presence immediately brought on some dangerous emotion. At one time he became violently delirious, and insisted on getting up; at another time he fell into such complete exhaustion that his dissolution seemed imminent. In his wanderings his thoughts were with his friends; and the names of Lord Hardinge and Sir James Graham were frequently upon his lips. On Tuesday, the 2nd of July, at four o'clock in the morning, he fell asleep for some hours, and hopes were again entertained of his recovery; but at two o'clock in the afternoon, the most alarming symptoms manifested themselves, his pulse became weaker and quicker at the same time; at six o'clock, his pulsations were scarcely perceptible. The physicians announced that the fatal moment was not now far distant. The Bishop of Gibraltar, Dr. Tomlinson, an old friend of Sir Robert, was sent for. On his arrival, Lady Peel and her children returned into the sick-room, and surrounded the bed in silence and in prayer. Sir Robert, reviving for a moment, looked at them, recognized them, and making an effort to give them his hands, uttered these scarcely-articulate words, 'God bless you!' Lord Hardinge and Sir James Graham, who had just arrived, were admitted

into the room; Lady Peel's emotion was so great, that it became necessary to lead her away. Sir Robert did not appear to perceive her departure; suffering ceased with consciousness; and at nine minutes after eleven o'clock at night he expired, without agony, surrounded by three of his brothers, three of his sons, his son-in-law Lord Villiers, his two friends Lord Hardinge and Sir James Graham, and his physicians.

On the next day, Wednesday, the 3rd of July, when the House of Commons met, none of the members of the Cabinet were present. One of their friends apologized for their absence, saying, that Lord John Russell had not yet returned from the country, whither he had gone on the day before. Mr. Hume, Mr. Gladstone, and Sir Robert Inglis, after a few words of sincere homage and deep regret, proposed to the House to adjourn. The following day, Lord John Russell, in laying on the table the report of the Royal Commission, adopting Hyde Park as the site of the Great Exhibition of 1851—the last public act in which Sir Robert Peel had taken part, a few hours before the accident occurred which had caused his death,—said: 'I will ask the House to allow me to take this opportunity of mingling my voice of sorrow with that of the House in general, at the great loss which this House and the country have sustained. At the first contemplation of that misfortune, it is impossible not to be overcome with a feeling of awe—that one who, so late as Friday night last, informed the House by his judgment, and

took a part which became him in one of the most important discussions of the year, should already be mingled with the dead, and that, not by an attack of disease gradually overcoming nature by the exertion of its power, but by one of those common accidents by which we are apt to think that a life so gifted could hardly be taken from us. . . . It is not for me to speak of the career of Sir Robert Peel; it never happened to me to be in political connection with him. . . . But there can, I think, be no doubt, that however history may deal with the wisdom of the career which he pursued, it will be admitted that, upon two great occasions when he held power undisturbed, and apparently with almost perfect security, and when he proposed measures to this House which shook, and afterwards subverted his power, he did so from the motive of deep love to his country, and from that deep sense of duty which always distinguished him. Of these occasions I shall not speak; but there is one part of his career to which I would wish but briefly to refer, and of which, I trust, I may be allowed to speak, because I feel it due to him to pay that tribute which has not perhaps been hitherto paid to his merits. I allude to that period which elapsed from 1832 to 1841. After the contest which took place upon the Reform Bill, it was to be dreaded that those who had opposed that bill, expecting results from it calamitous to the country, would have retired in disgust from public contests, and thereby have left a war of classes to be carried on, which would have involved permanent injury to

this country. I consider Sir Robert Peel to have been the man who prevented such a contest from taking place. Although he had opposed the Reform Bill, yet he addressed himself manfully to the situation in which he was placed; he addressed himself to the country on behalf of those principles of which he was the most able defender, brought back again the various powers of the State into harmony, and showed himself not afraid of abiding by the verdict of the people upon those measures and principles of which he was the advocate. I consider that great service was thus rendered by him to the country upon this occasion. . . . This also I must say that my testimony will always be, that the harmony which has prevailed for the last few years, and the safety which we have enjoyed during times of trouble and contention in this country, have been mainly owing to the course which the late Sir Robert Peel thought it his duty to follow. With these feelings, I wish to say that, if it should appear to the friends of Sir Robert Peel that it will be desirable to take that course which was taken upon the death of Mr. Pitt, I should for my own part give my willing support to any motion that may be made for a public funeral. . . . I may, perhaps, be permitted to add that, thinking it right to obtain the sanction of the Crown before I made any such proposal, I feel assured that anything which could do honour to the memory of Sir Robert Peel, or which could add any further tribute of respect to his name, would be unhesitatingly sanctioned by the assent of Her Majesty. I place myself entirely in

the hands of the nearest friends of the late Sir Robert Peel. Having had no political connection with him myself, perhaps this proposal may come more fitly from me, as not being moved by any partiality. But I do feel that this country now, and that posterity hereafter, in reckoning the names of eminent statesmen who have adorned the annals of this country, and have contributed to their lustre, will place that of Sir Robert Peel among the foremost.'

Such a tribute, almost equally honourable to him on whom it was bestowed and to him who paid it, deserved an answer of a still rarer quality; and such an answer was given. One of the most intimate friends of Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Goulburn, who had been his Chancellor of the Exchequer in both his administrations, and whom he had appointed one of the executors to his will, rose and said: 'I do not rise with the view of adding anything—it would be impossible—to the testimony the noble Lord has borne to my late right honourable friend's abilities, exertions, and public services. . . . I rise merely to express to the noble Lord and to the House the feelings of his friends and his family with respect to the proposition the noble Lord has intimated his readiness to make. I accept the proposition on their behalf, with the strongest gratitude, as an acknowledgment of the gracious disposition of the Crown as to the merits of a great public servant; and I accept it with equal gratitude as the highest tribute which the House of Commons can pay to any individual, however eminent or exalted. I feel deeply—and I

speak on the part of the family—we feel deeply the honour of having such a proposition suggested by the First Minister of the Crown, and responded to, if I mistake not, by the unanimous assent of the House. But I must be permitted to state one other feeling which influences our decision on this matter. Those who are unacquainted with the private character of my late right honourable friend have little idea of the simplicity of character which was in harmony with all his other great qualities. If ever there was a man desirous to avoid pomp and ostentation, that man was Sir Robert Peel: and such pomp and ostentation he particularly reprobated in connexion with funerals. . . . I will read to the House an injunction contained in a will signed by my right honourable friend on the 8th of May, 1844, when he was in the full plenitude of power—at the head of a large party in this House, and when the measures which he had brought into Parliament had been crowned with a success even transcending his own expectations:—

'"I desire that I may be interred in the vault in "the parish church of Drayton, in which my father "and mother were interred, and that my funeral may "be without ostentation or parade of any kind."

'Nor did these sentiments undergo any alteration, for not later than six weeks since, when an alteration was made in that particular church to which this memorandum refers, Sir Robert Peel pointed out to Lady Peel the very spot in the vault in which he wished and trusted his body would be laid, without any of that parade and ostentation which, in all cases,

he so earnestly deprecated. Under these circumstances, I am sure the House will feel that I have but one duty to fulfil—that his family have but one wish to express—and that is, thankfully to acknowledge the intention, both of Her Majesty and her Parliament, in conferring upon him the greatest honour that can be paid to a subject by the House of Commons, but at the same time to say they are compelled respectfully but firmly to decline the proposition.'

The House received these words with an emotion, I might almost say, with a respectful submission, which was in itself the worthiest homage to Sir Robert Peel. Similar testimonies of esteem and regret were rendered to him in the House of Lords. The Marquis of Lansdowne, in the name of the Government, Lord Stanley, as a former ally and a recent opponent, Lord Brougham, as a friend to liberal reforms, and the Duke of Wellington, with the authority of an equally disinterested and glorious leader, under whom Sir Robert had long served, and who had chosen to serve under him in his turn—rose successively to do honour to his memory, with unequal eloquence, but with equal sincerity and sorrow. And on the day following that on which Sir Robert Peel received these splendid tributes in the two Houses of the Parliament of his country, on the 5th of July, 1850, M. Dupin, the President of the Legislative Assembly of France, addressed to that Assembly these opportune and appropriate words:—'Gentlemen,—At the moment when a neighbouring and friendly nation is deploring the recent loss of one

of her worthiest statesmen, Sir Robert Peel, I think we shall do honour to the French tribune by giving utterance within these walls to the expression of our sympathizing regret, and by manifesting our high esteem for that eminent orator, who, during the whole course of his long and glorious career, never entertained any sentiments but those of justice and friendship towards France, never employed any but words of courtesy towards her Government. (Cheers from all sides.) If the Assembly is pleased to approve of what I have said, it shall be entered on our minutes.' The insertion of this expression of feeling on the miutes of the day was ordered unanimously.

These eulogies, these regrets, these universal testimonies of esteem and sympathy, both at home and abroad, were still resounding far and wide, when, on the 9th of July, at about one o'clock in the afternoon, the body of Sir Robert Peel was carried from Drayton Manor, across the park and fields, to the parish church. His family, his principal political friends (who had come down from London to attend the funeral), his household servants, and the farmers and labourers on his estate, formed the procession. The weather was gloomy; the rain fell in torrents; a thick fog, blown hither and thither by violent gusts of wind, covered the face of the country. A numerous multitude, from Tamworth and the surrounding villages, had nevertheless assembled near the church, at the entrance to the graveyard. On the arrival of the coffin, all stood uncovered, motionless, and mute; slowly it was carried, through the tombs, to the portal of the church;

at the head of the procession, the Bishop of Gibraltar read aloud the prayers of the liturgy; and when it had entered the church, the crowd pressed eagerly, but noiselessly, into the edifice. The Bishop ended the funeral service. The desire of Sir Robert Peel was religiously fulfilled; his body was lowered, without pomp or ostentation, into the vault in which his father and mother were interred,—followed by the regrets and prayers of the humble population among whom he lived when he was not engaged in governing the State.

It becomes great men to die with modesty; and it befits great nations splendidly to honour their memory. England has not failed to discharge this pious duty towards Sir Robert Peel. While in accordance with his own wish, he received a village funeral, amid the fields—in London, at Manchester, at Glasgow, at Edinburgh, at Birmingham, at Leeds, and in a great number of other towns, meetings were held, and municipal corporations adopted resolutions, for the erection of monuments and statues to his memory. Some of these have already been erected; others are in process of execution; I shall refer only to two, the loftiest and the humblest. It is a certain sign of greatness that it obtains recognition at every degree of the social scale, and leaves everywhere, in the cottage as well as in the palace, the traces of its presence upon earth.

On the 12th of July, Lord John Russell proposed to the House of Commons that a monument should be erected to Sir Robert Peel in Westminster Abbey,

with an inscription expressive of the public sense of so great and irreparable a loss. 'I do not intend,' he said, 'to dwell on the political services or on the public character of the deceased statesman; and I will not enter, at this time, into the nature of the measures with which his name is associated. I think it far better to refer to the example which has recently been given by the commission appointed to consider the eminent men in commemoration of whom statues should be erected in the new House of Parliament. Among others, they determined that statues of Hampden and Lord Falkland should be placed in this building . . . . No doubt they felt that they were both men of such splendid talents and such manly virtues as to adorn the age in which they lived; and that, however different their views, they had both most at heart the love and welfare of their country. Let us not wait for a long period to elapse before we take occasion to do honour to the departed statesman. Let us do so now—not two centuries hence, as in the case of the honours to Hampden and Lord Falkland—not even ten, twenty, or thirty years from hence, but now, when every one agrees in the desire to do honour to the memory of Sir Robert Peel.' The House at once adopted the proposition, and on the 18th of July it received official intimation that the Queen had given the necessary orders for the accomplishment of its desire.

In the previous week a committee had opened, in the name of the working classes, a penny subscription for the purpose of erecting to the memory of Sir

Robert Peel a 'Poor Man's National Monument.' Mr. Cobden was requested to allow the use of his name as one of the patrons of the project. 'It will be to me,' he wrote in reply, 'a melancholy satisfaction to be associated in so appropriate a mode of expressing the almost universal feeling of sorrow at the loss of a great public benefactor. The illustrious statesman who has been taken away from us with such awful suddenness, sacrificed every other object of ambition to secure to the firesides and workshops of the toiling multitudes of this country the blessings of increased prosperity, health, and happiness. He knew the immediate penalty he would have to pay for the service he was rendering the nation, but he relied with prophetic faith upon the future verdict of the people. In the moment of his severest trial, when delivering the speech which closed his official career, —after speaking of the ties of party which he had severed for ever, of the political friendships he had converted into bitter enmities, of the floodgates of calumny he had let loose upon himself,—after recounting mournfully but without repining, the sacrifices he had made, he turned for sympathy and justice to the mass of the people, and closed his last speech as minister with the following words:—

"It may be, that I shall leave a name sometimes "remembered with expressions of good-will in the "abodes of those whose lot it is to labour and to earn "their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, when "they shall recruit their exhausted strength with

" abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it " is no longer leavened by a sense of injustice."

'Thus, in the work you have undertaken, you are, perhaps unconsciously, realizing the aspirations of the departed statesman. In piling up the pence of the working class into a pyramid to his memory, let me suggest that the above passage be inscribed upon its base. It will prove that he did not over-estimate the justice or gratitude of his countrymen.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

Tribute to Sir Robert Peel's love of truth paid by the Duke of Wellington.—Sir Robert Peel's Memoir on Catholic Emancipation.—Anecdote of Sir Robert Peel.—Dissolution of party ties.—Influence of the Aristocracy.—Changed spirit of the English Democracy.—Improvement in the Government of England.—Sir Robert Peel's resolution to decline all honours.—Conclusion.

THESE splendid demonstrations certainly did not exceed the national feeling which inspired them; and that national feeling, in my opinion, did not transcend the requirements of justice. Beneath a cold and stiff exterior, without brilliancy of imagination, and without expansive abundance of disposition, Sir Robert Peel possessed and had displayed the qualities, I should rather say, the virtues which excite and justify the affectionate admiration of peoples. He was sincere and devoted, and invincibly courageous in his sincerity and devotedness. 'In all the course of my acquaintance with Sir Robert Peel,' said the Duke of Wellington in the House of Lords, 'I never knew a man in whose truth and justice I had a more lively confidence, or in whom I saw a more invariable desire to promote the public service. In the whole course of my communication with him, I never knew an instance

in which he did not show the strongest attachment to truth; and I never saw in the whole course of my life the smallest reason for suspecting that he stated anything which he did not firmly believe to be the fact. I could not, my Lords, let this conversation come to a close, without stating that which I believe to have been the strongest characteristic feature of his character.'

There is another testimony which, I think, fully confirms the Duke of Wellington's opinion: it is the testimony of Sir Robert Peel himself. At the end of the Memoir which he wrote to explain and justify his concurrence in Catholic emancipation in 1829, he says: 'If it had been alleged against me, that the sudden adoption of a different policy had proved the want of early sagacity and foresight on my part—if the charge had been that I had adhered with too much pertinacity to a hopeless cause—that I had permitted for too long a period the engagements of party, or undue deference to the wishes of constituents, to outweigh the accumulating evidence of an approaching necessity—if this had been the accusation against me, I might find it more difficult to give it a complete and decisive refutation. But the charge preferred by those whose favour and good-will I had forfeited was the opposite of this; it was that I had without any sufficient reason, nay that I had from pusillanimous and unworthy motives, counselled the abandonment of resistance which it would have been easy as well as wise to continue unabated. . . . . I can with truth affirm, as I do solemnly affirm in the presence of Almighty God, "to

whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid," that in advising and promoting the measures of 1829, I was swayed by no fear except the fear of public calamity, and that I acted throughout on a deep conviction that those measures were not only conducive to the general welfare, but that they had become imperatively necessary in order to avert from interests which had a special claim upon my support—the interests of the Church and of institutions connected with the Church—an imminent and increasing danger. It may be that I was unconsciously influenced by motives less perfectly pure and disinterested—by the secret satisfaction of being,

> '—— when the waves went high,
> A daring pilot in extremity.'

But at any rate it was no ignoble ambition which prompted me to bear the brunt of a desperate conflict, and at the same time to submit to the sacrifice of everything dear to a public man, excepting the approval of his own conscience, and the hope of ultimate justice.'

There is nothing to contest in this free confession of a great honest man: the substance is as true as the tone. When he changed his opinion and his policy, Sir Robert Peel was perfectly sincere; he merely obeyed what he considered to be the truth, and his only object was the public good. He might, without injustice, be taxed with want of foresight; and the secret desire to accomplish himself those great reforms which he believed to be just and necessary, rendered him, perhaps, too ready to break party ties, and pre-

vented him from seeing all the inconveniences of so doing; but when he himself meets these accusations half-way, who would lay them rigorously to his charge?

An anecdote which I have from good authority would give reason for believing that he had been long and naturally inclined to the tendency to which he yielded when, after having been a stubborn Conservative, he became an ardent Reformer. It is said that, in 1809, when he entered the House of Commons, his father, old Sir Robert Peel, went to Lord Liverpool, and said to him: 'My son, you may be sure, is a young man of rare talent, and will one day play an important part; but I know him well; at bottom, his tendencies are Whig; if we do not immediately enlist him in our ranks, he will escape from us; give him something to do, he will serve you well, but you must make sure of him without delay.' Lord Liverpool observed the son, recognized his merit, and followed the father's advice. When old Sir Robert Peel died, in 1830, he had already seen his presentiment realized; Catholic emancipation had just been effected; but for ten years he had ceased to be a member of the House of Commons, and lived in retirement on his estate at Drayton, where the glory of his son probably consoled him in some degree for a transformation of which he had discerned the germs.

While doing full justice to the moral character of Sir Robert Peel, many good judges nevertheless deplore his political faithlessness; after having, they say, had the merit and honour of reconstructing the

Conservative party, he dissolved it with his own hands; when he changed his opinion and recognized necessities which he had not foreseen, he ought to have retired from power and stated his motive for so doing, instead of making himself, as he did, the active and decisive promoter of ideas and measures which he had long opposed. By pursuing the course he did, he broke down all traditions, commingled all camps, sacrificed the policy of principles to the policy of expediency, and destroyed those great parties, those permanent and faithful parties which, under the representative system, are the necessary and regular instruments of free government.

I may here call attention to a fact which has been too little noticed. Though taunted bitterly with this reproach, and placed unceasingly in presence of the great political question connected with it, Sir Robert Peel always evaded the charge. Instead of resisting on the precise point at which he was attacked, he transferred his defence to some other point; he contested the extent of party obligations; he asserted the rights of conscience; he established his sincerity, his disinterestedness, the urgency of his new measures; he invoked, in support of them, the popular distress, the maintenance of peace among the various classes in the State, the public welfare. But with regard to the necessity and the function of great and stanch political parties, with regard to the consequences of his example in reference to their disorganization, with regard to the effects of their disorganization upon constitutional Government, he said

nothing, as if he either did not feel the importance of the attack, or did not know how to repel it.

I am astonished at this. What would Sir Robert Peel's adversaries have thought and answered, if he had said to them: 'You accuse me of destroying the old political parties; they no longer exist; they are daily dissolving of themselves, not by any act of mine. Where are the principles, the interests, the passions, which called them into being? You call yourselves Tories and Protestants *par excellence*; are you ready to treat the Catholics as enemies, to make war upon them, to confiscate their property? Do you seriously believe the throne of the House of Hanover and the Protestant succession to be in danger? The reforms which I propose to you to make in the laws were made long ago in the minds of men, in the minds of most of yourselves as well as in those of your adversaries. Your most illustrious leader, Mr. Pitt, your boldest champion, Lord Castlereagh, your most eloquent orator, Mr. Canning, were all in favour of the emancipation of the Catholics. The old parties still preserve their traditions, but they no longer retain their faith; they march under the same banner, but they no longer fight for the same cause. New causes have arisen; new ideas rally men together or keep them apart; new wants demand satisfaction. I follow this course of things; I consult the symptoms which develop themselves; I enter upon the paths which are opened, and in which the generations of my time precede me. I change only because everything is changed—parties as well as ideas, feelings, and

manners. You think you are what your fathers were; you are mistaken; you can persist in this error only on condition of remaining motionless; as soon as you begin to move and act, you will feel yourselves compelled to change, you will feel that you are already changed. Do not impute to me that which is the work of time; do not reproach me for transformations which, are general, though not equally visible everywhere; do not stigmatize as desertion and treachery that which you will do yourselves when you are called upon to govern your transformed country.'

Sir Robert Peel would have been entitled to hold this language. The reason of his political changes was placed far higher than his opponents seemed to suspect; and where they only sought a personal offence with which to taunt him, they ought to have seen the irrevocable accomplishment of a great social fact. Because she had not, for a century, gone through any revolution, England had not therefore remained motionless; although they are still the same externally and in form, the great elements of English society, the great powers of English Government, the monarchy, the aristocracy, the Church, the democracy, have all been deeply modified in their spirit, in their mutual relations, and in their influence in the State. Before the Revolution of 1640, the English aristocracy had, in great political crises, shown respect for the rights and interests of the people; but they were not the less the dominant class, chiefly regardful of their own interests, and powerful enough to secure to them

the first rank in public affairs. After the Revolution of 1688, though making far greater concessions to the interests and feelings of the people, and constantly recruiting their own ranks from among the people, the aristocracy still continued to be the preponderant class; their interests and views, the views and personal interests of their leaders, still frequently determined the conduct and the measures of the Government. The aristocracy are now merely the governing class; the great public offices are in their hands; but they discharge the duties of those offices under the influence, with a view to the interests, and in accordance with the opinions, of the country at large. After 1688, the monarchy was closely connected with one or other of the two great aristocratic parties—with the Whigs as long as the Protestant succession and the cause which had triumphed in 1688 were in question—with the Tories during the struggle first of all against the independence of the American colonies, and afterwards against the French Revolution and the Empire of Napoleon. It is now liberated from these ties: it has recovered, in its relations with political parties, not indeed domination, but independence; it has resumed its office as a mediating and moderating power, at once superior and popular. Less absolute than ever, it nevertheless enjoys more fully and freely than ever its constitutional power and rights. The Anglican Church, without losing its political position, has devoted and still devotes itself increasingly to its religious mission; faithful to the Crown, it is nevertheless from the faith, the feelings, and the pious

practices of the Christian people that it seeks and finds its principal support. But the English democracy has changed its character, far more than the other social powers. In 1823, in reference to the French intervention in Spain, M. de Talleyrand said in the Chamber of Peers: '*Il y a quelqu'un qui a plus d'esprit que Napoleon, plus d'esprit que Voltaire; c'est tout le monde.*' It might be said at the present day, even with regard to England: 'There is some one who has more power than the Crown, more power than the aristocracy, and that is everybody.' And when we say everybody, we name the democracy. Where does it begin? where does it end? by what visible signs is it distinguished from the other elements of society? No one can tell; but this is of little consequence; though difficult to define, the fact is neither less certain, nor less powerful on that account. The most diverse elements enter into the composition of the modern democracy—members of the wealthy classes and of the poorer classes, of the educated classes and of the ignorant classes, masters and workmen, conservatives and innovators, friends of power and enthusiasts for liberty, many aristocrats even, detached from their original class by their manners, and by their aversion to the restraints and duties which aristocracy imposes. And the position of the English democracy is not less changed than its composition; it no longer limits itself, as in former times, to defending its liberties in case of need, and to exercising an indirect and remote influence over the ruling power; it regards public affairs as its own, keeps assiduous watch over those

who transact them, and if it does not govern the State, it rules the Government.

What will be the consequences to the destinies of England, both in the world and on her own soil, of so great and so unprecedented a fact? No one can measure them now; England is still engaged in that work of transition and transformation during the progress of which all things are fluctuating and obscure. Two results, however, are already visible. At home, in the legislation and daily administration of the country, the progress is immense; justice, disinterested good sense, respect for all rights, consideration for all interests, the conscientious and searching study of social facts and wants, exercise far greater sway than they formerly did in the government of England; in its domestic matters and as regards its daily affairs, England is assuredly governed much more equitably and wisely. At the summit of the State and in its external relations, in the general designs and permanent conduct of its government, the great political spirit, the spirit of harmony and order, has grown weaker. Not only are the old parties disorganised, but the principles and connecting links which might re-form parties capable of governing, do not yet appear. In this general confusion and hesitation, public men are becoming enervated and lowered; they are losing that independence of mind, that loftiness of heart, that constancy of view, which characterised the old aristocratic leaders; they are looking below themselves and at their feet for a thread to guide them through the dark labyrinth in which they

live, instead of carrying in their hands a torch to enlighten the people, and draw them after them. A more generally happy and free state of society, and a less elevated and fixed government—a more agreeable present, and a less certain future—such are the advantages and the evils, the progresses and the injuries, which, without a revolution, without a shock, democracy and its increasing empire have hitherto wrought for England.

Sir Robert Peel is the most eminent statesman who has sprung from its ranks—the most honest as well as the most able, the most congenial and faithful to democracy, at the same time as the most free from its evil tendencies. Although adopted by the aristocracy from his very entrance into public life, and although he served in their ranks, he never gave himself over to them, and far from pretending, as it is said, to the honour of belonging to their body, he was proud of his plebeian origin, and did not seek to conceal it either by his manners or by his maxims. He was dignified without elegance, and with perhaps more susceptibility than was consistent with his superiority, which he ought to have enjoyed with greater confidence and ease. On seeing him at Court, in the drawing-rooms of Windsor, I was struck by a little constraint and stiffness in his attitude; he was evidently the most important and the most respected man there, and yet he did not look as if he were at home; his sway did not appear to be exempt from embarrassment; he governed without reigning. No one felt or expressed a deeper and more affectionate

respect for the ancient institutions, the ancient manners, the whole old social order of his country; he revered and loved the past, though he was not of it—and that is a certain mark of great judgment as well as of virtue; but at the same time he regarded aristocratic distinctions and honours with something more than indifference; it was his fixed resolve to reject them. In 1835, after that tenure of office which did him so much honour, though it was so brief, King William IV. wished to give him an earldom; Peel refused. Had he been merely an ambitious man, he would have been right; in passing from the House of Commons to the House of Lords, he would have lost his strongest position and his greatest power; but at a later period and without the same motive, he exhibited the same repugnance to analogous and still more exceptional honours. Queen Victoria, who had contracted a great esteem for him, and felt the full value of his services, desired to bestow on him the Order of the Garter; before speaking to him on the subject herself, she wished to know how he would receive the favour at her hands. Sir Robert peremptorily declined it. In vain did his friends insist, in vain was he told of several instances of members of the House of Commons, simple baronets like himself (Sir Robert Walpole among others), who had been created Knights of the Garter: he persisted in his refusal. He left behind him, by means of a last will which extended even to his successors, a still more significant mark of his aversion to all reward, all aristocratic distinction, and of the feeling which animated

him in this respect. When, on the 12th of July, Lord John Russell proposed to the House of Commons that a monument should be erected in Westminster Abbey to the memory of Sir Robert Peel: 'It is,' he said, 'the only remaining means by which we may show, or endeavour to show, our sense of the loss the country has sustained. Perhaps I may in this place state that Her Majesty, being anxious to show the sense which the Crown entertained of the services rendered by Sir Robert Peel to the Crown, desired me to inform Lady Peel that Her Majesty was anxious to bestow upon her the same rank as was bestowed on the widow of Mr. Canning.[1] I received this day an answer to this offer on the part of the Crown which I immediately communicated to Her Majesty, in which Lady Peel says it is her own wish to bear no other name than that by which Sir Robert Peel was known. Lady Peel has also intimated that a specific direction was left for his family by the late Sir Robert Peel, in which he desires that no one of his family would receive any title or public reward in respect of any services which he might be supposed to have rendered the country. This is a strong reason why this House should desire that some other testimonial should remain, by which this House may testify its feeling with respect to an event so sudden, and that a calamity so great should not be allowed to pass by without notice.'

[1] On the death of Mr. Canning, in 1827, his widow was personally raised to the peerage under the title of Viscountess Canning, with remainder to her sons, one of whom now bears it.

In Sir Robert Peel's will, as Lord John Russell stated, there was found, under the date of the 8th of May, 1844, at the moment of his greatest power, a memorandum in these terms: 'I sincerely hope and desire that no member of my family will either seek, or accept, if it should be offered to him, any title, distinction or reward on account of the services which I may have rendered in Parliament or as a member of the Government. If my sons, by their own efforts, acquire any title to such distinctions, they will probably receive, if they desire them, the rewards due to their own personal merits; but it is my positive wish that no title or mark of honour should be sought or accepted by them on account of the great offices I filled, or the acts which were effected by me.'

Never, assuredly, was the democratic principle, 'to each man according to his deserts and deeds,' manifested in a higher sphere, or by an act of more severe and complete disinterestedness. Never, perhaps I may also say, were the inmost heart and character of Sir Robert Peel more sincerely revealed. He was a great and honest servant of the State, proud with a sort of humility, and desiring to shine with no brilliancy extrinsic to his natural sphere; devoted to his country without any craving for reward, heedless of fixed principles or long-standing political combinations, anxious at all times to ascertain what was demanded by the public interest, and ready to carry it into effect without caring either for parties and their rules of conduct, or for his own acts and words; severing himself from the past with-

out cynical indifference, braving the future without adventurous boldness, solely swayed by the desire to meet the necessities of the present, and to do himself honour by delivering his country from peril or embarrassment. He was thus in turn a Conservative and a Reformer, a Tory, a Whig, and almost a Radical; popular and unpopular; using his strength with equal ardour, sometimes in making an obstinate resistance, sometimes in yielding concessions which were perhaps excessive; more wise than provident, more courageous than firm, but always sincere, patriotic, and marvellously adapted, in a period of transition like ours, to conduct the government of modern society as it has become, and as it is becoming more and more, in England as elsewhere, under the influence of the democratic principles and feelings, which have been fermenting in Europe for fifteen centuries, and which in our days are gaining victories in regard to which no one can yet tell what will be their true and final result.

I have confidence. This, however, is my apprehension. Democracy has two serious faults: it aspires passionately to hold undivided sway, and it is habitually swayed by its interests and passions of the moment. To judge by the history of the world, it is of all social powers the most exacting and the most improvident, the one which least admits of limitation or division of authority, and also the one which most obeys its present caprices, without care for the past or for the future. When put to the test, monarchy and aristocracy both were wise enough, especially in Eng-

land, to fix limits to themselves, and to allow their place and share of importance to other rights and other social forces. As, moreover, they have their roots in the past and promise themselves a future, it is their nature to take great account of time and its power, and to be at once ambitious and patient. Will modern democracy have the same wisdom? Will it recognise that there are other powers besides its own, and that there are necessities contrary to its desires? Will it, in governing, acquire more memory and more forecast? Will it learn to show greater respect for the traditions of the past, to allow less influence to the impressions of the present, to give greater heed to the necessities and chances of the future? Great and perilous questions these, which still remain in suspense, and which must greatly occupy the thoughts of honest and right-minded men. Time will answer them. I trust that it will answer them to the honour of free governments and of humanity

APPENDIX

RELATIVE TO THE

TAHITI QUESTION.

APPENDIX.

I.

Thirteen English Missionaries, resident in Tahiti, to his Excellency Rear-Admiral Dupetit-Thouars.

WE, the undersigned, ministers of the Protestant mission on the islands of Tahiti and Moorea, in Committee assembled, having a knowledge of the late changes which have taken place in reference to the Tahitian Government, beg to assure his Excellency that, as ministers of the Gospel of Peace, we shall consider it our imperative duty to exhort the people of these islands to a peaceable and uniform obedience to 'the powers that be,' considering that by such means their own interests will be best promoted, but more especially as such obedience is required by the 'laws of God,' which we have hitherto made our special business to inculcate.

(Signed) D. DARLING, *Chairman.*
WM. HOWE, *Secretary.*
J. M. ORSMOND.
JOHN DAVIES.
J. S. M. BEAN.
JOHN S. TYRSON.
THOMAS JOSEPH.
ROBERT THOMPSON.
E. BUCHANAN.
ALFRED SMEE.
WM. HOWE, for TH. NOLL, and A. SIMPSON, who are absent through illness.

Buaamania, Sept. 21st, 1842.

II.

Mr. Pritchard to Admiral Du Petit-Thouars.

SIR, Paofaï, Tahiti, Nov. 7th, 1843.

HAVING been officially informed by Queen Pomare that you have taken from H.M. the sovereignty of these isles, I have the honour to acquaint you that my functions as British Consul must now cease. I have accordingly struck my flag, not having been accredited by the British Government as Consul to a French colony.

I do now, in the name of my Government and on the behalf of the British residents, most solemnly protest against your proceedings in this taking of the dominions of an independent sovereign who, for nearly half a century, has enjoyed the friendly protection of Great Britain, from which she has received repeated assurances 'that H.M. (Queen Victoria) will at all times be ready to attend to any representations that Queen Pomare may wish to make, and will always be glad to give the protection of her good offices to Queen Pomare in any differences which may arise between Queen Pomare and any other power.'

You, sir, cannot be in ignorance of the fact that those islands are indebted solely to Great Britain for their civilization and religious advantages.

I now hold you responsible to the British Government for the losses and damages which may arise to British subjects or British property by your proceedings.

I have the honour, &c.,

(Signed) G. PRITCHARD,
One of H.M.'s Consuls.

III.

Captain Tucker to Governor Bruat.

H.B.M.'s Ship "Dublin,"
SIR, Papéiti, 8th January, 1844.

I HAVE the honour to inform you, that I have directions from my Commander-in-Chief to acknowledge the French

Protectorate Government of these islands, and, were it now in existence, I should hasten to acknowledge the same.

Sufficient time not having elapsed for the reappointment of G. Pritchard, Esq., as Consul, by H.B.M.'s Government in England, to these islands as a French possession, and being about to proceed to sea with further instructions by my Commander-in-Chief, I beg to appoint G. Pritchard, Esq. (one of H.B.M.'s Consuls), as the most eligible person to take care of the British interests in the Friendly and Society Islands, under the orders of W. Miller, Esq., residing at Honolulu, Sandwich Islands, appointed H.B.M.'s Consul-General for the islands in the Pacific.

May I beg to be informed when I may have the honour of presenting Mr. Pritchard in his official capacity?

With the highest respect,

I have the honour, &c.,

(Signed) J. JERVIS TUCKER,
Captain.

IV.

Governor Bruat to Captain Tucker.

MONSIEUR LE CAPITAINE, Papéïti, 8 jan., 1844.

J'AI l'honneur de vous accuser réception de votre lettre de ce jour, qui confirme en tous points celle que m'a écrite M. l'Amiral Thomas, et par laquelle il m'informe de la reconnaissance par l'Angleterre du Protectorat Français dans ces îles.

Du moment, Monsieur, où vous ne donnez aucun signe exterieur de reconnaissance, vous restez vis-à-vis de moi dans la position que vous avez prise dès le principe, et puisque vous êtes obligé d'attendre la décision du Gouvernement Britannique pour la réinstallation d'un consul, je suis dans la même obligation pour permettre son rétablissement.

Je suis fâché que vous ne vous croyiez pas à même d'installer un consul qui reconnaisse le gouvernement établi. Je sens combien vous devez y tenir, quoique cependant je puisse vous assurer que les intérêts de vos nationaux ne péricliteront pas entre mes mains.

Si vous vous décidiez à saluer le pavillon français, salut qui vous serait rendu par la terre, je dois vous declarer que je ne pourrais donner l'*exequatur* à M. Pritchard, dont la conduite a été par trop hostile au Gouvernement Français.

Je vous prierai, dans ce cas, de me désigner une autre personne.

V.

Captain Tucker to Governor Bruat.

H.B.M.'s Ship "Dublin,"
Papeïti, 9th January, 1844.

SIR,

I MUST beg to refer you to the second paragraph of my letter of yesterday's date, in which I do not propose to give Mr. Pritchard a reappointment under his old commission as consul, but a new appointment for the time being, until the pleasure of H.B.M.'s Government, or my Commander-in-Chief, can be ascertained.

I again state that I am ready to acknowledge the Protectorate Government, were it now in existence, and willing to salute its flag; but must decline saluting the national flag of France on Tahiti until further instructed by my Commander-in-Chief.

I am not aware that Mr. Pritchard's conduct has been such that a reasonable objection can be raised to his appointment as H.B.M.'s consul; but if such exist, it may be readily conveyed to Rear-Admiral Thomas, or W. Miller, Esq., H.B.M.'s Consul-General at Honolulu. I must therefore again propose the appointment of Mr. Pritchard as the most fit and competent person to act as consul, until his conduct has been considered by our respective Governments. Allow me, Sir, at the same time to express my conviction that the subjects of H.B.M. will receive justice in all matters that come under your own personal knowledge.

With the highest respect,
I have the honour, &c.,
(Signed) J. JERVIS TUCKER,
Captain.

VI.

Governor Bruat to Captain Tucker.

M. LE CAPITAINE, Papéïti, 12 janvier 1844.

PAR votre lettre du 9 de ce mois, vous me faites remarquer que vous ne me proposez pas d'installer M. Pritchard avec son ancienne commission de consul, mais sous un titre provisoire, jusqu'à la décision de S. M. B. ou de votre amiral en chef.

C'est bien parceque j'avais conçu votre lettre de cette manière que je me sens forcé, ainsi que vous, d'attendre la décision de mon gouvernement.

Je trouve tout naturel que vous attendiez les ordres de votre amiral pour saluer le pavillon français. C'est le désir bien sincère que j'ai de conserver les relations de bonne amitié qui heureusement existent entre nos deux gouvernements, qui m'a forcé de vous annoncer que je ne donnerais pas l'*exequatur* à M. Pritchard.

Son opposition au gouvernement du Protectorat est assez connue qu'il soit inutile de motiver davantage mon refus, fondé principalement, j'ai l'honneur de vous le répéter, sur mon vif désir de continuer les relations amicales qui, je me plais à le reconnaître, n'ont pas cessé d'exister entre vous et moi.

Soyez persuadé, M. le Capitaine, de toute l'attention que je porterai aux intérêts de vos nationaux.

VII.

M. Bruat to M. Guillevin, Commandant of "La Meurthe."

MONSIEUR LE COMMANDANT, Papéïti, 12 Mars 1844.

D'APRÈS une lettre du commandant Gordon, du bateau à vapeur le "Cormoran," qui consent à recevoir M. Pritchard, vous aurez à lui annoncer qu'il partira sur ce bâtiment, et que dès aujourd'hui il est autorisé à recevoir sa famille; vous voudrez bien, en conséquence, mettre une embarcation à sa disposition pour les heures qu'il vous fixera. Aucune embarcation étrangère au bord ne sera admise.

En faisant connaître ma décision à M. Pritchard, vous lui exprimerez le regret que j'éprouve d'avoir été obligé de m'assurer de sa personne, et de lui faire quitter la colonie.

Le gouverneur

(Signé) BRUAT.

VIII.

Ten English Missionaries resident in Tahiti to Governor Bruat.

Paofaï, March 19th, 1844.

To his Excellency the Governor of the French Possessions in Oceania.

SIR,

WE, the undersigned body of Protestant Missionaries in Committee assembled at Paofaï, Tahiti, feeling a deep conviction that it is our duty, as ministers of the Gospel of Peace, to attempt collectively that which has partially failed by individual effort, to induce the natives now collected together on the east side of the island, to return peaceably to their dwellings. Knowing, however, the vast influence that the chiefs now outlawed have over the people, we believe that even this attempt would prove nugatory, unless we have authority from his Excellency the Governor, to present them terms of amity on their compliance.

The Missionaries will feel obliged by an early reply from his excellency.

(Signed) D. DARLING.
WM. HOWE.
CHAS. JOSEPH.
R. THOMSON.
J. S. McKEAN, A.M.
JOHN J. JESSON.
JOSEPH MOORE.
JOSEPH JOHNSTON.
E. BUCKMAN.
ALFRED SMEE.

IX.

M. Bruat to the Protestant Missionaries in Tahiti.

MESSIEURS, Papéïti, 19 mars 1844.

JE viens de recevoir la lettre que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'adresser, et j'ai vu avec un véritable plaisir que vous étiez animés des sentiments qui doivent présider à toute réunion religieuse.

Je suis persuadé que ceux que vous exprimez aujourd'hui ont toujours servi de base à votre conduite vis-à-vis d'un peuple que vous avez entrepris de diriger spirituellement.

Puisque vous désirez sincèrement la paix, mon opinion est que la démarche qui amènerait le plus promptement ce résultat serait que vous vinssiez me voir et reconnaissiez franchement mon autorité; alors votre concours aurait toute sa puissance pour le maintien de la tranquillité si nécessaire à l'œuvre pour laquelle vous travaillez depuis longtemps, et que mes instructions et ma conviction particulière me font un devoir de soutenir.

Il me semble que, tant que vous n'aurez pas fait cette démarche, les Indiens, quelque peu versés qu'ils soient dans les usages Européens, trouveront toujours, lorsque vous les engagerez à la soumission, quelque chose qui, dans votre propre conduite, n'est pas en rapport avec les instructions que vous leur donnez.

Quelle que soit, d'ailleurs, votre détermination, la démarche que vous me proposez, toute politique qu'elle soit, a mon assentiment, puisque vous l'avez soumise à mon approbation; mais je ne puis vous autoriser à parler en mon nom, puisque vous n'avez pas mes instructions.

Néanmoins, pour arriver aux résultats si désirables que vous espérez obtenir, vous pouvez promettre aux chefs qui viendront immédiatement à Papéïti faire leur soumission pleine et entière au Gouvernement Français, qu'ils ne seront ni arrêtés, ni exilés.

Recevez, etc.,

Le gouverneur,

(Signé) BRUAT.

(This letter was followed by a request for an audience, which was granted by the Governor.)

X.

M. Bruat to Admiral de Mackau.

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE, Papéïti, 21 Mars 1844.

DANS mon rapport, n° 24, daté du 13 de ce mois, je vous annonçais le départ du bâtiment à vapeur anglais, "Le Cormoran," qui a emmené avec lui M. Pritchard. Quelques heures après ce départ, la frégate "La Charte" a paru, apportant des Marquises plusieurs passagers et la 26e Cie d'infanterie que j'avais fait demander.

Le 14 au matin, cette frégate, ayant mis ses troupes à terre, est partie pour remplir sa mission et s'en est parfaitement acquittée.

J'ai à me louer de tous les rapports individuels que j'ai eus avec les missionnaires anglais. Ils commencent à comprendre que ce mouvement, où leur autorité est méconnue, est de la part des révoltés une manifestation contre tous les blancs, qui, sans exception, en deviendront victimes, si elle n'était comprimée.

Vous verrez par ma correspondance avec eux qu'ils ont fini par me demander une audience. Leur orateur a lu un écrit où étaient traités différents points; je leur ai immédiatement répondu, et ils ont été entièrement satisfaits de ce que je leur ai dit sur la liberté religieuse.

Je n'ai pas dû leur accorder une amnistie générale pour les chefs révoltés; je me suis contenté deleur promettre de rester dans les termes que j'avais posés dans ma première lettre. Après en avoir délibéré, ils m'ont déclaré que j'avais pleinement raison, et qu'agir autrement serait, comme je le disais, encourager la révolte.

Les copies de la correspondance que m'a adressée le commandant d'Aubigny, pendant mon séjour à Taravaii, vous feront connaître la nécessité où il s'est trouvé de mettre Papéïti en état de siège et d'arrêter M. Pritchard, ex-consul d'Angleterre. Dans l'agitation où se trouvait le pays, cette mesure était nécessaire; mais je n'ai dû approuver ni la forme ni le motif de cette arrestation. Cependant la gravité des événements était telle que je ne pouvais revenir sur ce qui avait été fait sans décourager notre parti et raffermir les révoltés.

A mon arrivée, j'ai de suite fait transférer M. Prichard du blockhaus à bord de "la Meurthe," en donnant au commandant Guillevin l'ordre de le recevoir à sa table. Considérant que M. Pritchard n'était plus qu'un simple résident anglais, dont l'influence sur l'ex-reine Pomaré et le parti révolté était devenue dangereuse pour la tranquillité de l'île, j'ai écrit au capitaine du "Cormoran" pour l'engager à quitter Papéïti, où il n'avait aucune mission, et à emmener M. Pritchard, que je promis de mettre à sa disposition dès que le bâtiment quitterait le port. Après avoir reçu l'adhésion du commandant Gordon, j'ai donné l'ordre à M. Guillevin, commandant de "la Meurthe," de prévenir M. Pritchard que le "Cormoran" le prendrait à son bord, et qu'il était libre de recevoir sa famille qui, avertie à deux reprises, n'a pas profité de cette permission. Je n'ai reçu, du reste, aucune réclamation verbale ou écrite de M. Pritchard; il a même adressé une lettre à M. d'Aubigny pour le remercier des soins qu'on lui a donnés.

Veuillez agréer, etc.,

(Signé) BRUAT.

XI.

M. Guizot to the Count de Jarnac.

(Private.)

Auteuil, Samedi, 3 août 1844.
8 h. du matin.

MON CHER JARNAC,

J'AI vu Lord Cowley. J'ai lu les documents que Lord Aberdeen vous a communiqués. Voici ce que je pense et ce que j'ai dit à Lord Cowley:

1°. Evidemment, après la lettre de M. Pritchard à l'Amiral Du Petit-Thouars, du 7 novembre 1843, les autorités Françaises à Taïti n'ont pu ni dû le considérer plus longtemps comme consul d'Angleterre. Il avait officialement déclaré qu'il devait cesser et qu'il cessait ses fonctions. Il avait réellement, et en fait, depuis cette époque, cessé de les exercer. Le Gouvernement Anglais peut trouver à Londres, comme me l'a dit Lord

Cowley, que M. Pritchard a eu tort de se conduire ainsi, et qu'il n'avait pas droit de cesser ses fonctions de consul. C'est là une question entre M. Pritchard et le *Foreign Office*. Mais à Taïti, pour les autorités Françaises, M. Pritchard, ayant volontairement abdiqué ses fonctions de consul et amené son pavillon, n'était plus et ne pouvait plus être qu'un résident étranger, un missionnaire Anglais comme tout autre.

En septembre 1842, lorsque l'Amiral Du Petit-Thouars a établi provisoirement, aux termes de la convention du 9 septembre, le Protectorat Français à Taïti, M. Pritchard a protesté contre cet acte; mais il n'a point amené son pavillon; il n'a point déclaré qu'il cessait ses fonctions de consul; il a continué de les exercer. S'il n'avait fait que cela en novembre 1843, lorsque l'Amiral Du Petit-Thouars, au lieu du Protectorat, a pris possession de la souveraineté complète de l'île, il aurait pu, au mois de mars 1844, revendiquer son caractère de consul. Mais il y avait formellement et officiellement renoncé. Son abdication des fonctions consulaires en novembre 1843 était tout autre chose que sa protestation en septembre 1842, et le plaçait dans une situation toute différente, dans la situation d'un simple résident étranger, soumis au droit commun local sur les résidents étrangers.

2°. Aux termes de la convention du 9 septembre 1842, "La direction de toutes les affaires avec les gouvernements étrangers, de même que tout ce qui concerne les résidents étrangers, est placé à Taïti entre les mains du Gouvernement Français ou de la personne nommée par lui." Le droit de renvoyer de l'île tout résident étranger, qui troublerait l'ordre établi ou travaillerait à le renverser, appartient donc aux autorités Françaises. Ce droit existe dans tous les établissements de ce genre, Protectorat ou colonie proprement dite. Je ne doute pas que le Gouvernement Anglais ne le possède, et ne l'exerce aux îles Ioniennes, aussi bien que dans l'île Maurice, et dans toutes ses colonies. Nous l'avons toujours considéré comme inhérent au Protectorat Français dans Taïti; et je vous écrivais le 11 septembre 1843: "Nous pensons, comme Lord Aberdeen, que les torts individuels d'un missionnaire ne saurait avoir pour

effet d'enlever à ses confrères les droits qu'ils ont à la protection du Gouvernement du roi. Certainement aussi il reconnaît avec nous que la qualité de missionnaire ne saurait protéger contre une juste sévérité, celui qui s'en ferait une arme pour attaquer l'ordre établi, soit par la violence, soit par l'intrigue. Le zèle religieux, même sincere, n'aurait jamais dû, et ne peut, en aucun cas, de nos jours, servir de voile, de justification et de sauvegarde à de coupables machinations contre les gouvernements."

Les autorités françaises de Taïti avaient donc le droit de faire embarquer M. Pritchard, comme tout autre étranger, et de le renvoyer de l'île, s'il travaillait à renverser ou à troubler l'ordre établi.

3°. En fait, il me paraît certain que telle était bien réellement la conduite de M. Pritchard. Son attitude et son langage dans toutes les lettres, pièces et actes quelconques émanés de lui, ses conseils sans cesse renouvelés à la reine Pomaré, la conduite toute différente de plusieurs missionnaires anglais, les rapports uniformes de tous les agents français, en un mot, tout ce qui s'est passé à Taïti entre septembre 1842 et mars 1844, démontre l'hostilité active et incessante de M. Pritchard contre l'établissement Français, protectorat ou souveraineté complète, dans cette île, et donne le droit de penser qu'au mois du mars dernier, au milieu d'une sédition matérielle dans une partie de l'île, et d'une fermentation évidente à Papéïti même, les autorités françaises ont eu des motifs raisonnables et légitimes de considérer M. Pritchard comme le principal instigateur de ces troubles, et de l'éloigner de Taïti.

Je suis convaincu qu'après un examen attentif des faits et des documents, tout homme impartial, tout spectateur indifférent serait amené à regarder ceci comme incontestable.

4°. En même temps, je pense, et j'ai dit à Lord Cowley, que la détention de M. Pritchard pendant six jours dans un blockhaus, et la proclamation du 3 mars de M. d'Aubigny, sont des actes violents, contraires au droit, et dignes de blâme.

XII.

M. Guizot to the Count de Jarnac.

(Official.)

M. LE COMTE, Paris, 8 août, 1844.

J'AI reçu la dépêche que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'écrire le 4 de ce mois, et dans laquelle, en me rendant compte de l'effet général produit en Angleterre par les nouvelles de Taïti, vous me signalez toute la gravité de cet incident. Plus les esprits s'en montrent passionnément préoccupés, plus il importe de leur laisser le temps de se calmer. Nous nous abstiendrons donc, en ce moment, de toute communication, de toute discussion officielle à ce sujet. Mais notre réserve ne doit pas être inactive, et je vous invite à faire au Foreign Office d'abord, et aussi partout ailleurs, tout ce qui sera en votre pouvoir pour combattre et rectifier les erreurs de faits, les fausses appréciations qui pourraient égarer de plus en plus l'opinion publique et entraîner le Gouvernement Britannique lui-même à des résolutions ou à des manifestations qui rendraient plus difficile la solution d'une question délicate. Si je ne me trompe, l'irritation qui se manifeste en Angleterre tient surtout à ce qu'on y croit que M. Pritchard, lorsqu'il a été arrêté et ensuite embarqué, etait revêtu du caractère de consul de S.M.B. Rien n'est moins exact. M. Pritchard avait, par une lettre du 7 novembre, 1843, adressée à M. l'Amiral Du Petit-Thouars, formellement déclaré qu'il amenait son pavillon et cessait ses fonctions consulaires, et il les avait, en effet, complètement cessées. Ce n'était donc plus que comme simple particulier, comme étranger, qu'il résidait à Taïti. Or, le droit d'éloigner d'un établissement colonial, quelle qu'en soit la forme, tout étranger dont la présence trouble l'ordre et compromet la sureté de l'établissement est non seulement un droit partout reconnu et pratiqué, mais il résulte pour nous, à Taïti, de la convention même du 9 septembre, 1842, qui porte que la direction de toutes les affaires avec les gouvernements étrangers, de même que tout ce qui concerne les résidents étrangers, est placé à Taïti entre les

mains du Gouvernement Français ou de la personne nommée par lui.

M. le Gouverneur Bruat avait donc incontestablement le droit d'éloigner de Taïti M. Pritchard; et d'après les faits tels qu'ils nous sont jusqu'à présent connus, il y a tout lieu de penser que, pour la sûreté de l'établissement Français dans cette île, pour celle même des troupes françaises chargées de le défendre, il y a eu nécessité d'user de ce droit en renvoyant de Taïti le chef moral et le principal instigateur des mouvements insurrectionnels qui avaient éclaté sur quelques points et menaçaient Papéïti même.

Quant aux circonstances qui ont accompagné le renvoi de M. Pritchard, je ne me dissimule point qu'elles ne sauraient toutes être justifiées, et qu'on y rencontre des procédés et des paroles qui choquent l'équité, l'humanité et la convenance. Mais je ne dois et je ne veux exprimer à cet égard mon jugement que lorsque j'aurai scrupuleusement recueilli et examiné, sur cet incident, tous les renseignements propres à m'éclairer.

Recevez, etc.

XII.

M. Guizot to the Count de Jarnac.

M. LE COMTE, Paris, 29 août, 1844.

J'AI rendu compte au roi dans son conseil des entretiens que j'ai eus avec M. l'ambassadeur de S.M.B. relativement au renvoi de M. Pritchard de l'île de Taïti et aux circonstances qui l'ont accompagné. Le gouvernement du roi n'a voulu exprimer aucune opinion, ni prendre aucune résolution avant d'avoir réuni toutes les informations qu'il peut espérer, et mûrement examiné tous les faits; car il a à cœur de prévenir tout ce qui pourrait porter quelque altération dans les bons rapports des deux états.

Après cet examen, le gouvernement du roi est demeuré convaincu:

1°. Que le droit d'éloigner de l'île de Taïti tout résident étranger qui troublerait au travaillerait à troubler et à renverser

l'ordre établi, appartient au gouvernement du roi et à ses représentants; non seulement en vertu du droit commun de toutes les nations, mais aux termes mêmes du traité du 9 septembre, 1842, qui a institué le protectorat Français, et qui porte: "La direction de toutes les affaires avec les gouvernements étrangers, de même que tout ce qui concerne les résidents étrangers, est placée à Taïti entre les mains du gouvernement Français, ou de la personne nommée par lui."

2°. Que M. Pritchard, du mois de février 1843 au mois de mars 1844, a constamment travaillé, par toute sorte d'actes et de menées, à entraver, troubler et détruire l'établissement Français à Taïti, l'administration de la justice, l'exercice de l'autorité des agents Français et leurs rapports avec les indigènes.

Lors donc qu'au mois de mars dernier une insurrection a éclaté dans une partie de l'île de Taïti, et se préparait à Papéïti même, les autorités Françaises ont eu de légitimes motifs et se sont trouvées dans la nécessité d'user de leur droit de renvoyer M. Pritchard du territoire de l'île, où sa présence et sa conduite fomentaient, parmi les indigènes, un esprit permanent de résistance et de sédition.

Quant à certaines circonstances qui ont précédé le renvoi de M. Pritchard, notamment le mode et le lieu de son emprisonnement momentané et la proclamation publiée à son sujet, à Papéïti, le 3 mars dernier, le gouvernement du roi les regrette sincèrement, et la nécessité ne lui en parait pas justifiée par les faits. M. le Gouverneur Bruat, dès qu'il a été de retour à Papéïti, s'est empressé de mettre un terme à ces fâcheux procédés, en ordonnant l'embarquement et le départ de M. Pritchard. Le gouvernement du roi n'hésite point à exprimer au gouvernement de S.M.B., comme il l'a fait connaitre à Taïti même, son regret et son improbation des circonstances que je viens de rappeler.

Le gouvernement du roi a donné dans les îles de la Société des preuves irrécusables de l'esprit de modération et de ferme équité qui règle sa conduite. Il a constamment pris soin d'assurer, aux étrangers comme aux nationaux, la liberté de

culte la plus entière et la protection la plus efficace. Cette égalité de protection pour toutes les croyances religieuses est le droit commun et l'honneur de la France. Le gouvernement du roi a consacré et appliqué ce principe partout où s'exerce son autorité. Les missionaires Anglais l'ont eux-mêmes reconnu : car la plupart d'entre eux sont demeurés étrangers aux menées de M. Pritchard, et plusieurs ont prète aux autorités Françaises un concours utile. Le gouvernement du roi maintiendra scrupuleusement cette liberté des consciences et ce respect de tous les droits ; et en même temps il maintiendra aussi et fera respecter ses propres droits, indispensables pour garantir à Taïti le bon ordre, ainsi que la sûreté des Français qui y résident et des autorités chargées d'exercer le protectorat.

Nous avons la confiance que l'intention du Cabinet Britannique s'accorde avec la nôtre, et que, pleins l'un pour l'autre d'une juste estime, les deux Gouvernements ont le même désir d'inspirer à leurs agents les sentiments qui les animent eux-mêmes, de leur interdire tous les actes qui pourraient compromettre les rapports des deux états, et d'affermir, par un égal respect de leur dignité et de leurs droits mutuels, la bonne intelligence qui règne heureusement entre eux.

Je vous invite à donner à Lord Aberdeen communication de cette dépêche et à lui en laisser copie.

Recevez, etc.

XIV.

M. Guizot to the Count de Jarnac.

(Private.)

MONSIEUR LE COMTE, Paris, 2 septembre 1844.

EN exprimant au gouvernement de sa Majesté Britannique son regret et son improbation de certaines circonstances qui ont précédé le renvoi de M. Pritchard de l'île de Tahiti, le gouvernement du roi s'est montré disposé à accorder à M. Pritchard, à raison des dommages et des souffrances que ces circonstances ont pu lui faire éprouver, une équitable indemnité. Nous n'avons point ici les moyens d'apprécier quel doit être le

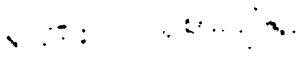
montant de cette indemnité, et nous ne saurions nous en rapporter aux seules assertions de M. Pritchard lui-même. Il nous paraît donc convenable de remettre cette appréciation aux deux commandants des stations Françaises et Anglaises dans l'Océan Pacifique, M. le contre-Amiral Hamelin et M. l'Amiral Seymour. Je vous invite à faire, de notre part, cette proposition au gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique, et à me rendre compte immédiatement de sa réponse.

Recevez, etc.

(Signé) GUIZOT.

A M. le Comte de Jarnac,
Chargé-d'affaires de France à Londres.

THE END.



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